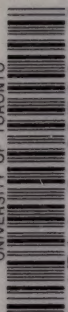


UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO



3 1761 01427281 9







# A VIEW of LONDON



## The Remarkable Places in this Ancient View of LONDON that are not distinguished by

- A. St. Margaret's Ch. Wylmoyne
- B. Fountain
- C. Clock Tower
- D. Parliament House
- E. Palace Gates
- F. Gates
- G. Clock Pitt
- H. Queens Garden
- I. St. Mary Rouncival
- J. Spring Garden

- L. St. Martins Church
- M. St. Giles's Church
- N. Strand Bridge
- O. Milford Lane
- P. St. Clement Dane's
- Q. St. Dunstons in the West
- R. Temple Gate
- S. Holborn Bars
- T. City Place
- V. St. Andrews Holborn

- W. Fleet Bridge
- X. Bridewell Palace
- Y. Walls along the River
- Z. Fleet Hill
- a. Lud Gate
- b. Giltspur Street
- c. Snow Hill
- d. Kester Lane
- e. Eye Corner
- f. Charter House

- g. St. Bartholomews Church
- h. City Walls
- i. Grey Fryers
- k. Christs Hospital
- l. Ivy Lane
- m. St. Pauls Cathedral
- n. Sermon Lane
- o. St. Mary Somerset
- p. Old Change
- q. Raining Lane

- r. Silver Street
- s. Magnell Street
- t. St. Giles's Cripple Gate
- u. Barbican Cross
- w. Cripple Gate
- x. Cat Lane
- y. Adde Street
- z. St. Alban Wood Street
- 1. Haggin Lane
- 2. Gurbick Hill

Reduced to this Size from a Large Print in the Collection of St. A.





Whitington's College  
Lyches Lane  
Gausing Hall  
Guild Hall  
Rocks Market  
Vallbrooke Church  
Bartholomew Lane  
Condon Stone  
Dearbinder Lane  
St. Mary Botolph Lane

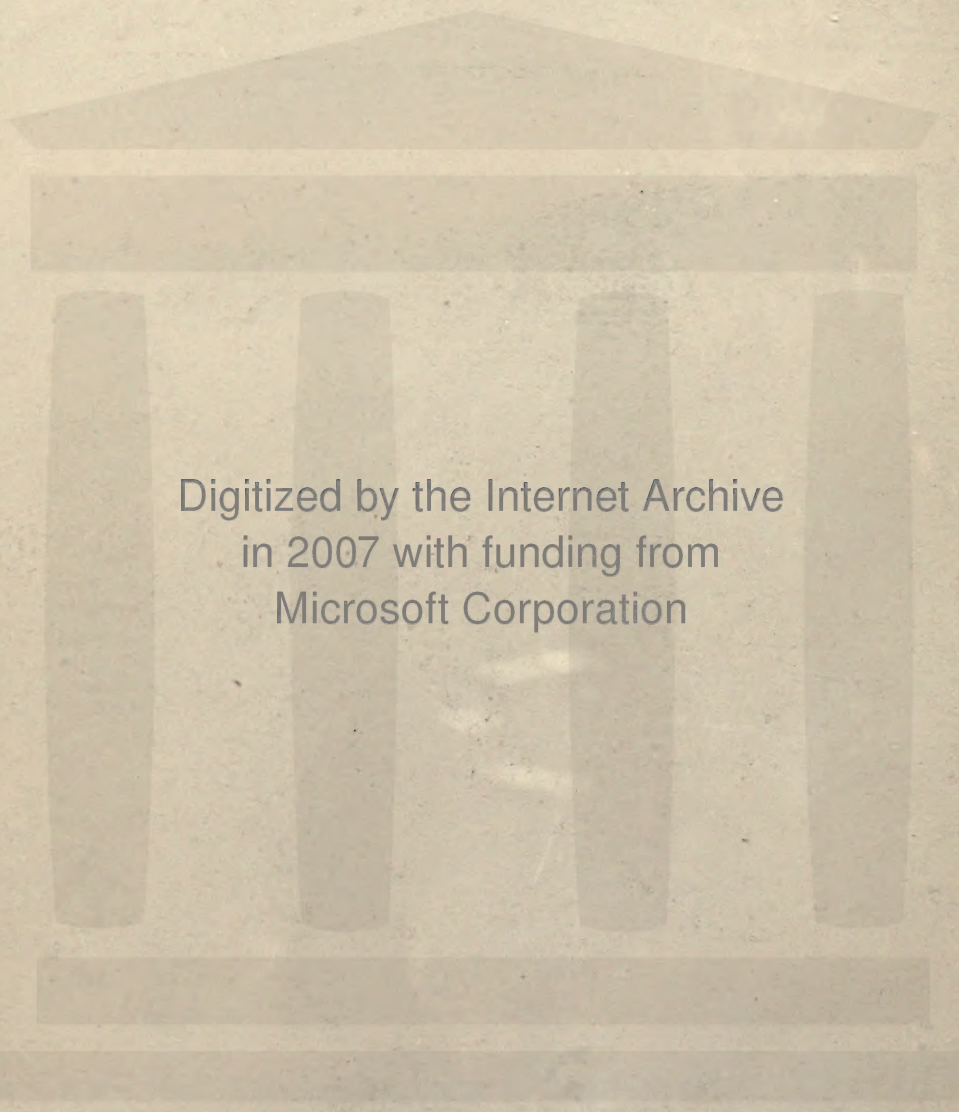
13. *Bush Lane*
14. *Craftsman*
15. *Burchin Lane*
16. *S. Anthony's Church*
17. *Allhallows in the Wall*
18. *S. Augustine's Ch.*
19. *S. Helen's Church*
20. *S. Dennis's Church*
21. *Fen Church*
22. *S. Margaret's Church,*

23. Love Lane  
24. St. Dunstons E. C. & Hill  
25. St. Andrew Undercroft  
26. Bishops Gate  
27. Spittle Fields  
28. Cree Church  
29. Ald Gate  
30. St. Botolphs Ulgate  
31. St. Katherine Coleman  
32. Hart Street

33. Woodroff Lane  
34. Serthing Lane  
35. Tower Hill  
36. Tower hill Eastern  
37. Minors Croft  
38. Abby of Grace  
39. St Katherine's Tower  
40. Tower Bridge  
41. Barken Church  
42. Newick House

43. St. Mary Overy Church  
44. St. Tooley's Church  
45. Winchester Place  
46. Paris Garden  
47. Lambeth House





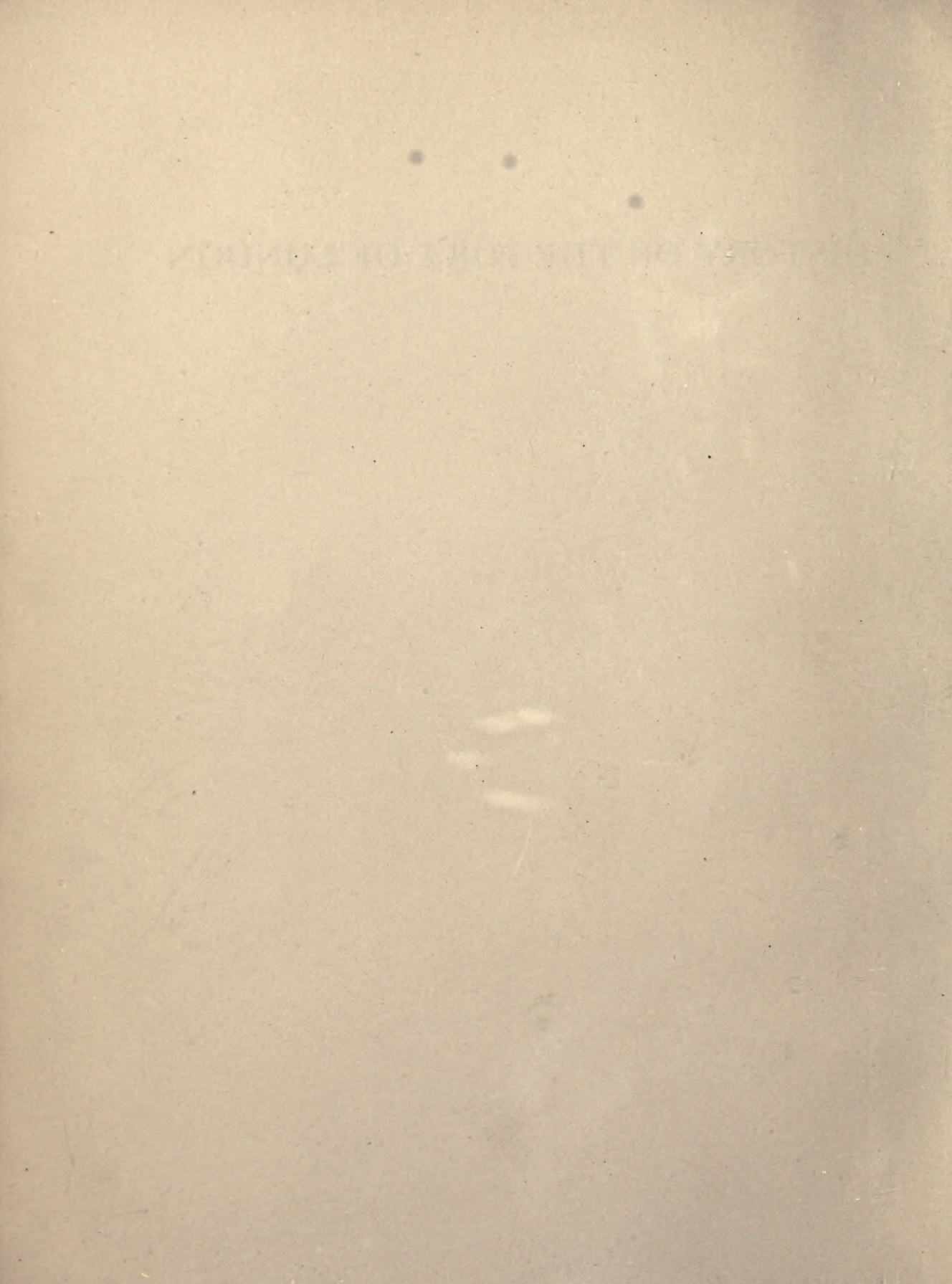
Digitized by the Internet Archive  
in 2007 with funding from  
Microsoft Corporation

<http://www.archive.org/details/historyofportofl01broouoft>



# HISTORY OF THE PORT OF LONDON













THE OPENING OF THE ST. KATHARINE DOCKS, OCTOBER 25th, 1828.

From an engraving by E. DUNCAN, after a painting by W. J. HUGGINS.



Ect  
B8715h

# HISTORY OF THE PORT OF LONDON

BY SIR JOSEPH  
G. BROODBANK CHAIRMAN OF  
THE DOCK & WAREHOUSE COM-  
MITTEE OF THE PORT OF LONDON  
AUTHORITY FROM 1909 TO 1920  
IN TWO VOLUMES: VOLUME I

169693.

9.3.22

PUBLISHED IN LONDON BY  
**DANIEL O'CONNOR** 90 GREAT  
RUSSELL STREET, W.C. 1921





"O Thou that art situate at the entry of the Sea which art a merchant of the people for many isles. . . . Thy borders are in the midst of the seas, thy builders have perfected thy beauty."—*Ezekiel* xxvii, 3 and 4.



## Preface

THE earlier chapters of this work are drawn mostly from sources open to all engaged in writing for the great London public who are interested in the history of their City. A perusal of these chapters may stimulate research amongst the materials which must exist for producing a more detailed picture of the Port before the eighteenth century.

In writing the later chapters I have had the advantage of access to Port records of the last 120 years, supplemented by 49 years personal association with Port administration as an Officer of two of the Companies and as Chairman of the Dock and Warehouse Committee of the Port of London Authority. I have some hope that this section of the work may be found to be useful to the Members of the Authority and also to those who carry on the many undertakings serving the Port outside the Authority's property.

Politicians who are in training for the responsibilities of statesmanship may find it profitable to compare the advantages and disadvantages of the various forms of control which have prevailed in the Port during past centuries.

These special classes of the community and the public at large will, it is hoped, welcome the opportunity of studying the processes by which the Port of London has reached its present prosperity.

It has been impossible to make the work an absolutely chronological record. Each of the organizations whose amalgamations now constitute the Port has had a career of its own as distinguished from its relationship to other bodies, and this fact necessarily involves a certain amount of overlapping in the story of the Port and the occasional repetition of events.

My thanks are due to the members of the Port of London Authority for the use of pictures and drawings and to their officials for much valuable help—also to Major Sir Edward Coates, Bart., M.P., and the Librarian at the Guildhall for permission to reproduce several of the pictures which illustrate the text.

J. G. BROODBANK.

31st May, 1921.







# Contents of Volume I

CHAPTER	PAGE
I Earliest Days	I
II The Saxon Port	12
III The Norman Port	24
IV General Progress of Foreign Trade in the 13th, 14th and 15th Centuries	36
V The Elizabethan Era	48
VI The 17th and 18th Centuries	58
VII The Agitation for Reform	77
VIII The West India Dock Company	92
IX The City Canal	111
X The London Dock Company	113
XI The East India Dock Company	121
XII The Settlement of Claims of the Legal Quays and other Interests	126
XIII The Surrey Dock System	131
XIV Termination of the Privileges	138
XV St. Katharine Dock Company	153
XVI The Conservancy Question	163
XVII The Thames Conservancy	183
XVIII The Victoria Dock	193
XIX The Fusion of Companies in 1864	197
XX The Small Docks	205
XXI East and West India Dock Company	207
XXII The Surrey Dock System subsequent to 1864	220
XXIII The Millwall Dock Company	225
XXIV Royal Albert Dock	228
XXV The Tilbury Dock	232
XXVI The London and India Docks Joint Committee	244







# List of Illustrations contained in this Volume

THE OPENING OF THE ST. KATHARINE DOCKS, OCTOBER 25TH, 1828. <i>From an engraving by E. Duncan after a painting by W. J. Huggins, reproduced by courtesy of Sir Edward Coates, M.P.</i>	PAGE Frontispiece
"HERE A SHIP FROM ENGLAND." <i>From the Bayeux Tapestry</i>	25
RIVER BANK AT TILBURY. <i>From a photograph lent by the Port of London Authority</i>	29
OLD LONDON BRIDGE. <i>From a painting by Samuel Scott</i>	45
SIR THOMAS GRESHAM. <i>From an engraving by R. Woodman after a painting by Sir A. More</i>	53
VIEW OF THE TOWER AND THE RIVER IN 1647. <i>From an etching by W. Hollar</i>	58
VIEW OF ST. PAUL'S FROM THE RIVER. <i>After Vischer</i>	62
HOWLAND GREAT WET DOCK, ROTHERHITHE, 1700. <i>From a contemporary print</i>	67
BRUNSWICK DOCK AT BLACKWALL, 1803. <i>From an aquatint by William Daniell</i>	70
VIEW AND HUMOURS OF BILLINGSGATE, 1736. <i>From a print by A. van Haecken in the Guildhall Library</i>	73
A VIEW OF BLACKWALL, LOOKING TOWARDS GREENWICH. <i>From an engraving by J. Boydell, 1750</i>	76
A PERSPECTIVE VIEW OF THE RIVER THAMES, ETC., TAKEN FROM THE KING'S ARMS AT BLACKWALL	80
GALLEY QUAY, LOWER THAMES STREET. <i>From an old engraving in possession of the Author</i>	85
NEW DOCKS AND WAREHOUSES on the eve of completion, 1802, on the Isle of Dogs, near Limehouse. <i>From an aquatint by William Daniell</i>	92







## CHAPTER I

### Earliest Days

**T**HOUGH acknowledged to be the greatest port in the world, the Port of London has been dwarfed by the fact that London is the largest capital city of the world, and also its chief financial centre. Except its 40,000 workers and the representatives of merchants and shipowners whose interests require attendance at the docks and river wharves and warehouses, very few Londoners see the port. Nor is it easy to visit the Port. At Liverpool or Hamburg the whole of the shipping is concentrated within the area of a few square miles, but operations in the Port of London are stretched out over fifty miles of river bank, and even the visitor who sails down the river in yacht or launch sees little of shipping except that which is moving up and down the river, as the docks are cut into the land across peninsulas and lay behind the high warehouses and factories which line the stream from London Bridge to Barking. Yet the power and influence of London began as a port. London was the chief port of the country before it was the capital, and its greatness as a city has increased with its commerce.

London is the only instance of the combination of a great port and a capital city. Petrograd, Lisbon, Amsterdam are instances of capitals possessing ports, but none of them can be classed in the category of great ports. Paris has been ambitious to be another London, but the cost of making the Seine navigable for large steamers is prohibitive. The comprehensive position of London may best be illustrated by the fact that it fulfils the functions which in Holland are performed by three cities : the Hague, the seat of Government ; Rotterdam, the chief port ; and Amsterdam, the centre of finance.

The business carried on at ports may be divided into two sections : transit and entrepôt. It is the vast entrepôt trade of the port which distinguishes London above all other ports. The majority of ports are transit ports. They are landing or shipping off places for goods brought in or



sent away by sea from one country to another, and such ports have no further concern with the cargoes transhipped across their piers or quays. An instance of the pure transit port is Rotterdam, which is the greatest transit port of the world, and its rapid rise in late years is due to the fact that it has become the principal sea outlet for German traffic on the Rhine. This class of business offers little advantage to the inhabitants of the town concerned, and Rotterdam is, as a fact, one of the poorest cities in Europe for its size. It is a matter for wonder why the Dutch have for so many years been spending their millions of florins on the magnificent accommodation on the Maas, merely to do at the cheapest possible rates the work of hewers of wood and drawers of water for the manufacturers of Cologne, Dusseldorf, and the centres of German industry in Westphalia. They get no more benefit out of such trade than do wayside villages out of motor traffic passing through their streets.

On the other hand, entrepôt ports are ports in association with markets and are sources of wealth to the communities which they serve. Such ports offer the same facilities as transit ports, but in addition provide the accommodation which is required for the sale of goods, including suitable warehouses and trained staffs for sale operations ; in other words, they perform the services incidental to a great wholesale market of foreign produce. Liverpool, Hamburg, Havre, Antwerp, and Amsterdam are typical ports of this character. It is noteworthy in this connexion with Amsterdam that though the tonnage of shipping using that port is only one-fifth of that using the Port of Rotterdam, Amsterdam is one of the richest cities in Europe. London is the pre-eminent entrepôt port in the world, and has been so since the destruction of Antwerp by the Spaniards in 1576. The value of this class of trade to the community cannot be exaggerated. It gives far more employment to labour of the better class than transit business. Large sums are paid to the warehousekeepers. Banking and insurance follow the goods. A multitude of paying guests in the form of sellers and buyers are brought into the city. These are some of the benefits to the community, and these benefits are widespread and fruitful. It is not over-stating to say that the prosperity of modern London has been chiefly due



to the carrying on of its huge entrepôt trade during the last 300 years. London's outstanding position as a great wholesale market centre for the world is not realized by the general public. The names of the retail markets for meat, fish, and vegetables are household words all over the English-speaking world. Comparatively few know the real meaning of the transactions carried on at the Wool Exchange in Coleman Street or at the Commercial Sale Rooms in Mincing Lane, because the goods which are sold there are not open to view on the premises, but are at the docks or riverside wharves some miles away, and sales take place on sample or inspection. Just as every class of manufactured article can be obtained at West End stores, so the great wholesale markets and warehousing stores on the eastern side of London offer the choice of the products of the world in bulk. Wool is the most important of London's entrepôt trades, and just before the war began it represented £25,000,000 per annum. It is perhaps the most striking example of this class of trade. Practically none of the wool remains in London. In normal times about two-fifths are purchased by foreign buyers, and the rest goes to the manufacturing districts of our own country. London is the market, and the wool comes to London simply to be sold. The advantages to the Metropolitan community are that besides the thousands of pounds spent on labour in landing the goods at the docks, more money still is spent on the operations in the warehouses in preparing for sale, in railway and cartage services, in financing transactions, in the insurance of the goods, and in the entertainment of the buyers who flock into London during sale days.

It was hardly likely that a trade so directly remunerative as the entrepôt trade and carrying with it developments so useful to the citizens of London should escape the attacks of competition or time, and the entrepôt trade has indeed been no exception to the other industries of the United Kingdom in this respect. It is true that the value of the foreign entrepôt trade of London is to-day many times the value of the entire foreign trade of the port at the end of the eighteenth century, but no one could pretend that London now relatively occupies the same position as it did then or even fifty years ago. The opening of the Suez Canal diverted trade to the Mediterranean ports; the

establishment of the international cable system enabling goods to be purchased direct by telegraph; the developments of Continental industries encouraging shipowners to run lines direct from the country producing raw materials to Continental ports; the cheapening of travel, making it profitable for manufacturers to buy at the point of production, are all causes which have led to rival markets in American and Continental ports. But these antagonistic causes appear to have expended their force, and for the five years before the war the Board of Trade returns indicate an important improvement in the entrepôt trade. What the war will eventually bring in its train can only be speculated upon till peaceful conditions prevail, and till the oblivion of time removes the moral and emotional effects upon trade operations of the envy, hatred, and malice imported into the struggle by the enemy. It is not difficult, however, to believe that with the disturbed conditions likely to exist, producers will for many years find it safer, more convenient, and more profitable to market their goods in the Port of London.

To what causes is the progress of London as a port due? Many circumstances have been at work, but the chief is the geographical and physical advantages it enjoys. The geographical advantages apply to the question of distribution of goods—a primary function of a port. It may be pointed out that the situation of London is about sixty miles from the sea, *i.e.*, about the distance which an ordinary steamer can cover while the incoming or outgoing tide flows. This situation enables goods to be brought into a district where the radius for distribution by land is very extensive, and yet it is not too far inland to interfere with distribution by sea if it is desired. Such a situation is relatively safe from a marauding enemy—a consideration which the merchant ever has in mind when he deposits his goods.

Then there is the bearing of this geographical position upon trade with the Continent. The mouth of the Thames faces the mouths of the Rhine and the Scheldt. The Seine and the Elbe are not far distant. Continental trade to the ports on these rivers with London is easy, and it has in fact developed on a large scale with the communities which have flourished on these great Continental rivers.

What has thus happened in relation to the Continent has



happened on a larger scale with the world, as colonies and dependencies have from time to time been established and as foreign countries have been developed. London is at the centre of the land surface of the globe, and, apart from the fact that trade follows the flag, it is natural that London should tend to be the clearing-house of the trade of the world, and that it has drawn to itself the greatest share of the entrepôt trade of the world.

Kemble, in his "Saxons in England," points out the potency of situation in the achievement of a city's greatness, instancing that neither royal favour nor court greatness could make Warwick, Stafford, or Winchester great, and pointing out that though these were the chosen residences of the rulers of Mercia and Wessex, the claims of London to be the capital ultimately prevailed. Much more does the principle apply to ports.

The physical advantages marking the Port of London are its broad and deep river enabling, even in its comparatively undredged state, vessels of the largest class to come up and enter its docks on any day of the year, and the facility with which its low alluvial marshes can be adapted into suitable accommodation for the reception of shipping and goods. The breadth and depth of the Thames have saved London from the fate which has overtaken most of the original ports of England, which were selected because of the accessibility they gave to the interior of the country when roads were poor, but which ceased to be used when roads improved and ships became larger. It seems difficult to realize now that York, Cambridge, and Lincoln were once important centres for the discharge and loading of sea-going ships and have been superseded respectively by Hull, Lynn, and Boston, as their streams became too shallow for shipping traffic. Had the citizens of Lincoln been able to show the enterprise of the citizens of Glasgow and Manchester they might have widened and deepened the Witham and commanded a trade not inferior to that of Liverpool. London has never had to face such a problem, and with less river dredging than in any of the other great ports can within three miles of London Bridge float vessels of 20,000 tons burden.

So far as it is possible to divine the intentions of the founders of London, no indications point to the purpose

being that of a port. Its name of Llyn-Din, "the hill by the pool," suggests that its value to the prehistoric men who selected it for their habitation was that of a fortress on the edge of a broad river, the more useful as such by virtue of the extensive forest on its north side and the marshes bound by the River Lea on the east side. History is absolutely silent as to when it was first realized that the situation chosen was the most convenient for the axle from which should radiate the principal roads of England on which intercourse of commerce should be carried and that the hill fort on the edge of the river (then three miles wide at high water and resembling a wide pool) was the ideal site in England for its greatest port.

It would appear that the Romans did not originally contemplate a settlement there, as the Watling Street route through Kent to Chester did not at first run through the City, but through Westminster, where the river broadened out and shallowed so that at certain times of the tide fording was practicable. Later consideration showed the value of the high ground to the eastward on the north side of the ford as a fortified station at the first crossing-place coming from the east, of the largest river in Britain.

Nothing appears in the pages of history about London until Tacitus, writing in his *Annals* on events following the rebellion of Boadicea in A.D. 61, says that Suetonius Paulinus, the Roman general, hastening from Anglesea to stem the torrent of rebellion, "with wonderful resolution marched amidst a hostile population to Londinium, which, though undistinguished by the name of a colony, was much frequented by a number of merchants and trading vessels."

When and how London had become a centre of trade is left untold. Julius Cæsar is our chief source of information about Britain before Tacitus. In the description of his first invasion of Britain 116 years before the Boadicean rebellion, he gives as the reason for the expedition his desire to know the character of the people, their towns, harbours, and landing-places, because he had discovered that in most of the Gaulish wars assistance had been rendered by the natives of Britain. He adds that merchants on the Continent were only acquainted with the sea coast and the parts immediately opposite the Gaulish coast. The



information thus obtained is recited by Cæsar in the chapter dealing with his second expedition in the following year. He said he had found that the number of people was countless and the number of cattle great, that tin and iron were produced in small quantities, and that timber of every description except beech and fir was obtainable. Corn, which 300 years afterwards became so important a British product, was then little grown, and the inhabitants lived chiefly on the milk and flesh of their cattle. There is no evidence here of any external trade carried on by the inhabitants of Britain, and we are driven to the conclusion that if London at this time was participating in trade at all it can only have been as a station on the largest navigable river in the country.

Julius Cæsar left Britain to itself after having penetrated the country up to an unnamed ford on the Thames, sometimes identified with Brentford. The sole result of his expedition was the imposition of a tribute on the several petty states his power reached ; whether paid or not paid when that power was removed does not appear on the record.

Britain remains in darkness for another 97 years, when Aulus Plautus, sent to conquer the southern half of the island, fulfilled his task and was able to hand over the country to the Emperor Claudius on the occasion of his fourteen days' visit to the island, A.D. 43. Colonization of the island then began in the usual Roman fashion, and though it was many years before even Chester became a Roman station, the south of the island rapidly became settled and absorbed Roman ideas and habits of living, so that by the year 61 London was a Roman town with a considerable Roman population, and with Verulam and Camulodunum is reported as having lost 70,000 inhabitants in the massacre by the men of Boadicea. It is evident that in the eighteen years between the Claudian conquest and the Boadicean rebellion the Roman authorities had appreciated the importance of London as a military centre. London was about halfway between the sea and the point where navigation of small craft ceased to be practicable. The town was on high ground and protected by the natural advantages already mentioned. It is no wonder that it had been developed as a depôt and a rallying-place for Roman

colonists, and this fact may be a clue to the beginning of the trade which Tacitus refers to. These colonists would not be satisfied with the conditions in which the natives lived and would import, as British settlers in new countries do to-day, the food and drink, the clothing, the furniture, and the articles of luxury from their agents in Italy or Gaul, and this would be effected through the medium of a Roman merchant. Whether this traffic was brought to London by road from Richborough or by sea up the Thames is not known. The roads were not originally made for trade, but as trade is merely the movement of goods instead of the movement of soldiers, the roads would serve the purpose, certainly in regard to the less bulky or more valuable goods. The probabilities seem in favour of the land route being used at first for all traffic, the river route being subsequently adopted for wine and other bulky traffic as the channels of the Thames became known to the Roman navigators.

How London's trade developed during the remaining period of the Roman occupation no writer assists us in determining. It is clear that production in the country generally was stimulated. Strabo, one of the few authorities, writing at the commencement of the Christian era, tells us that corn, which Julius Cæsar had found to be scarce there, was now grown and that with cattle, gold, silver, and iron, was exported to the Continent, also skins and slaves and hunting dogs. The importations were salt, earthenware, works in brass, horse collars, and articles of glass and amber. Tacitus, in the life of his father-in-law Agricola, who was Consul in Britain from A.D. 78 to A.D. 85, tells us that corn was plentiful, and mentions a complaint from the Britons that the corn was seized for the Roman granaries. Tacitus' record that Agricola "sounded the estuaries" is perhaps the chief evidence that foreign shipping traffic was cultivated by the Roman administration.

Colchester, Verulam, and Maldon were probably regarded by the Romans to be of more importance than London. Colchester had a mint, and issued gold and silver coins before the Claudian conquest, and later it was selected with London for a mintage by Carausius during his usurpation between 286 and 293, but the minting of coin was subsequently restricted to London.



Herodian, in his life of Severus, who died in York in 211, calls London "a great and wealthy city," and there can be no better evidence that traffic with the interior had become important than the fact that in the Itineraries of Antoninus seven of the fifteen roads described were main routes to London, and remain some of the chief main roads which to-day make London the centre of the road system in England. For over 200 years after Boadicea's rebellion there appears to have been no interference with the internal peace which is the foundation of commercial prosperity, but in 297 the City, following upon a rebellion amongst the Roman soldiers, was for a time in the hands of bands of Franks, serving under Allectus, who had murdered, and then succeeded Carausius. The citizens were rescued from these bands by Constantius, who had been sent to suppress the rebellion, and for another 62 years history is silent again. Then we hear, through Ammianus Marcellinus, in his description of the campaign of Julian the Apostate against the Allemanii in A.D. 359, that one of its objects was the establishment of granaries on the Rhine in the place of those which had been burnt in which to store the corn usually imported from Britain, the quantity that year being 800 cargoes. Ammianus relates that the object was rapidly accomplished and abundance of provisions laid up in them. Confirmation of the improved production of the country is found in the plundering sallies of the Picts, the Atacotti, Saxons and the Scots, described by the same writer as having taken place within the next ten years, the object of these sallies being the lifting of cattle. In the course of the punitive expeditions against these robber bands, Theodosius came to London (by this time called Augusta), attacked the robbers, routed them, restored the property, except a small portion allotted to his own soldiers, and then "joyful and triumphant made his entry into the city, which had just before been overwhelmed by disasters, but was now suddenly re-established almost before it could have hoped for deliverance." With this record it can hardly be doubted that London had become the market for the produce of the Thames Valley and that the conveyance of the corn from London to the storehouses on the Rhine was carried on by means of vessels direct from London. With this development of trade came the

increase in dignity indicated by the change from the Celtic "Llyn-din" to the Roman "Augusta."

A further confirmation of the importance which the Roman administration attached to the developing trade of these times is the appointment of the Count of the Saxon Shore, whose duty it was to protect the coast between Brancaster in Norfolk and Shoreham in Sussex. The intermediate stations were Caistor, Bradwell, Reculver, Richborough, Dover, Lympne, and Pevensey. It is not without significance that the central region of this jurisdiction was the estuary of the Thames, and that London was the central point where roads from the towns named would unite. The inference is that London was the chief object of this protective measure and that the reason for the measure was that the city had become a prosperous commercial town, full of the merchandise which tempted the free booters from the North, whose aims the Count of the Saxon Shore was intended to frustrate. Till the Roman power in Britain waned at the end of the fourth century and vanished soon after the fifth opened, the Count of the Saxon Shore, with his fleet and his legion of 10,000 men, was able to beat off the attacks of the pirates, to keep channels open between London and the Rhine, and to enable the trade of London to be carried on in safety.

What was the Port of London at this time? No direct evidence exists of quays or warehouses. The best authorities agree that the earliest site of the Roman settlers was on the high ground between the Walbrook and the Fleet streams. It would be obviously convenient that the warehouses should be on the Thames side as near high water mark as possible. But there would also be advantage in bringing craft up such channels as the Walbrook. Vessels would be more sheltered there and freer from the influences of the running stream of the Thames to allow work to be carried on. There is evidence that this method was adopted, as the remains of a vessel were found in the course of the Walbrook when Old Broad Street was reconstructed. It appears unlikely that there were any quays, either of stone or timber, in the Thames where vessels could discharge and load. The usual method of the Romans was to extend a mole or "jetty" into the deep water. While this was practicable in the tideless Mediterranean, which for the



purpose may be considered a vast dock, it was not practicable on a tidal river where there is a wide variation every six hours. It seems probable, therefore, that vessels were either moored in the Thames and their cargoes brought from the shore or sent there by boat, or they were beached alongside the warehouses on the Thames side, the smaller vessels going up the Walbrook or Fleet with the flowing tide and beached there for discharging or loading.

The extent to which London as a port served its hinterland was only bounded by the capacity of the navigable streams of the Thames and its tributaries to take traffic. Locks were not erected on the Thames until 1811, but by various devices in the parts of the river where the conformation of the bed was irregular, navigation appears to have been possible as far as Oxford during all historical time, and it does not appear to be an idle speculation to trace the original causes of the foundation of Oxford to the commercial advantage of its being at the junction of the Thames and Cherwell quite as much as to the inspiration of the monks of St. Friedswide. The size of the vessels used in the trade of these times was small, probably taking little more than 100 tons of cargo, and often the shipowner navigated his own vessel. The Vikings appear to have performed their predatory voyages in open boats about 70 feet long with a draft of 4 feet of water. The boats were propelled by rowing and sailing. The method of using sail for the cargo carrying craft of about 100 tons still survives in the fleets of sailing barges trading between London and the Medway to-day, and the single-sailed hoy running up and down the Rother between local ports and Rye. Such vessels had to study weather no more closely than fishing craft do to-day, and by keeping to the coast-line did not suffer seriously from storms. If on piratical errands, the estuaries on the East Coast of England afforded both shelter from the storm and hiding places from the pursuer. If navigation was practicable for the sea-robber from Denmark, it was even more practicable for the honest sea captains from Rhineland, in the voyages which they undertook up river far inland to York and Cambridge.

## CHAPTER II

# The Saxon Port

WITH the advent of the Anglo-Saxons in 446 we reach another stage in the development of British commerce.

The Anglo-Saxon incursion represented quite a different type of adventure from that of the Roman invasion. The power of the Roman arm was military, and the journey across the strip of sea that separated Gaul from Britain was but an incident of a campaign mostly pursued along a thousand miles of roads, and the campaign in Britain brought conditions of warfare unfamiliar to the Roman legions and more than once threatening disaster to them. The tidal variations of the English Channel seem to have puzzled the Roman navigators, while the uncharted and shifting channels in the Thames Estuary constantly hampered their movements. In these conditions trade by sea was not likely to be cultivated by the Romans for its own sake. When the legions were finally withdrawn, London could hardly have been more than a prosperous local depôt and the place where goods coming down the rich Thames valley could be transferred from river craft to seagoing craft sailing coastwise.

The Anglo-Saxon arrived in England as a robber whose track was on the sea, who left no trace of his route except in the fired and pillaged homesteads on the sea coasts or up the many estuaries on the East Coast of England where his privateers could penetrate. The sea was his home, the scene of all his operations, the source of his food. The healthy open-air bracing life supplied vigour and a buoyancy of spirit prompting enterprises which no sense of danger could quench. When he eventually subjugated the country and maintained some sort of order, when he came under the influence of such civilization as the Christianity of the times provided for him, the predatory instincts and energies which he had exercised on the sea when he was an irresponsible pirate were diverted to the pursuits of commerce, or the defence of his settled home. It was to these two objects that



his seamanship ultimately became applied. But it took 500 years, until Alfred sat upon his uneasy throne, before the commercial utility of the qualities developed by the life of continuous sea warfare could be available. Never do we read in the scanty records of those 500 years any entry that treats of the peaceful employment of shipping. In the eyes of the compilers of the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle ships were only of interest from the point of view of war. Thus we have it noted that in 495 Cerdic and Cynric his son arrived with five ships to fight the Welsh, and that in 501 Porta and his two sons with two ships landed at Portsmouth, and slew on the spot a young Briton of high rank. Then in 514 the first detachment of the West Saxons arrived in Britain with three ships and fought the Britons. In 787 we read of three ships of the Northmen from the "land of robbers, the first ships of the Danish men that sought the land of the English nation." Thereafter shipping appears constantly on the pages of the Chronicles and in increasing numbers. A great naval armament reached West Wales in 835. In 837 thirty-three pirate ships were fought and beaten at Southampton. In 840 King Ethelwoulf fought with thirty-five ships' crews at Charmouth, in Dorsetshire, and this time the Anglo-Saxons were beaten. The year 851 saw King Athelstan fight a naval battle with the Danes at Sandwich, taking nine ships and dispersing the rest. In the same year, not deterred by the defeat, a fleet of 350 Danish ships are reported to have come into the mouth of the Thames. The crews landed and stormed Canterbury and London. The character of the shipping of the day is indicated by the entry under the year 860 that in Ethelbert's days a large naval force came up the Itchen and stormed Winchester, and the extent of shipping can be gathered from records of the continual successful battles fought by the Danish armies brought over while Alfred was king.

What was the commercial position of London during these five hundred years? The records relating to the town are very few. That it remained important for a time, even after the Romans withdrew their forces and colonists, is shown by the entry in the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle, which states that after the battle in 457, when the English leaders Hengest and Esc inflicted a defeat on the Britons at Crayford, the Britons forsook Kent and fled to London for

shelter within its walls. It may be inferred that there was food there, as well as shelter, and that London then retained its trade. The next 150 years are a complete blank in the pages of history so far as London is concerned. Some historians have assumed from this fact that the Britons were followed up to their refuge, and that the victorious English destroyed the town that had sheltered them. The silence does not necessarily require this interpretation of events. Of the 150 years in question, the Chronicle only mentions 36 years, and the entries from some of these years only run into a dozen words. The entries chiefly deal with the rise of the West Saxon Kingdom and the establishment of the Northumbrian Kingdom. Nor is there evidence of the internal turmoil which marked later periods and which might have led to the destruction of such an important holding place as London. Even though London did suffer the extreme penalty, it is impossible to believe that its effacement would be more than temporary. The conqueror would perceive the strategic and commercial merits which had led to its pre-eminence and would inevitably restore the city after he had occupied it. Indeed, it is clear from what followed that any eclipse was of brief duration. St. Augustine commenced his mission in 596, and five years afterwards appointed Mellitus to be Bishop of London to minister to the East Saxons, of which London was then the capital. A city which became in such times the centre of ecclesiastical power was doubtless strong enough to supplement the strength of the spiritual arm by temporal forces, and it is scarcely likely that such a town had obtained such pre-eminence in a few years. It is noteworthy that the two bishoprics consecrated by Augustine should both have been important Roman fortified stations which were ports, viz., London on the Thames and Rochester on the Medway. It is also significant of the then superiority of London that upon the death of Laurentius in 616 the second Archbishop of Canterbury, it was Mellitus the first Bishop of London and not Justus of Rochester who was appointed to the Archiepiscopal throne. It is in his relation of these changes that Bede gives us the only direct allusion of a contemporary historian to the fact that London was then a commercial town of high rank. Writing in the early part of the eighth century, Bede, referring to



the appointment of Mellitus as first Bishop of London in 604, says that "London is the metropolis of the East Saxons situated on the banks of the aforesaid river, and is the mart of many nations resorting to it by sea and land." As already mentioned, Tacitus, in his records of London as it was in A.D. 61, had alluded to its trade. In Bede we have the first record of the international character of the trade of London ; and who can doubt that this development was due to the daring and enterprising qualities of the East Saxon settlers and their connexions with the Continent up the valleys of the Elbe and Rhine. No records whatever exist of the character of the merchandise then the object of these commercial transactions. Nor is this surprising. Little attention is bestowed by historians upon the volume and character of trade carried on in a country as affecting the life of a nation. Political changes, wars, and personal characteristics have ever been the staple interest of the reader, and will probably remains so till the end of time, even to a nation of shopkeepers. If this is the case now, much more was it so in times when there was no settled government and when the chief question for every man was not so much how to improve his resources by industry, but how long he would be allowed by his neighbour to remain in possession of his property. If we desire to know anything about the foreign trade of London in the seventh century we can only get the knowledge by inference. We can assume that the foreign trade would be chiefly carried on with the Continental districts with which the East Saxon had relations, and that would be the district contiguous to the Elbe, and perhaps the Cologne district. It may be surmised that the products exchanged were those which are subsequently noted as those dealt with by the Easterling merchants in London when their trading operations were regularized, viz., the imports included timber and resin, whilst the exports were corn and wool.

As to the home trade, we get a glimpse in a regulation which is included in the laws of Kings Hlothere and Eadric. Hlothere came to the throne of Kent in 673, and Eadric, his brother, succeeded him in 685, after a victorious battle against him. The regulation provides that if a Kentish man bought or bartered goods in "Ludenwic" he was to make the bargain in the presence of two or three

witnesses or the King's wic-reeve, and procedure is laid down to be observed if the ownership of the goods is subsequently disputed. This indicates that London was an important market at that time.

The era that commenced with the first incursion of Danes in 787 was an intensification of the war by sea. It became a case of the Anglo-Saxon sea-robber against the Danish sea-robber. At first sight it would seem as if trade would be driven off the seas. But this did not follow. There was an enormous impetus given to the building of ships primarily for war purposes, but in the peaceful intervals these ships would be diverted to peaceful use, so that though commercial operations were erratic, there was progress on the whole. We have seen in the great war just finished how trade will go on and that certain forms of it are actually stimulated by war and lead to demands upon shipping which cannot always be satisfied, and it is easy to believe that in its much smaller degree there were counterparts of the modern armed merchantmen trading between London and Cologne in the ninth century willing to take the risk of seizure by the enemy in consideration of the higher war freights obtainable. We are on firm ground in coming to the conclusion that one result of the constant raids in force on the Eastern Coast by the Danes between 787 and 1016, when Canute became King of England, was that London became more and more the great entrepôt of home and foreign products in the kingdom; and the reason was obvious. It was accessible by water to a very large section of the most civilized part of the country, and water was then, even more than now, the cheapest form of transit. It was a fortified city with strong walls, and it was sufficiently inland to present great difficulties to the invader who desired to reach it, and also to make it possible to cut off his communications by water as he approached the city. Its position for distribution of wares was incomparable. All these considerations would appeal to the merchant of that day as it has appealed since up to and including the late war, and he would prefer his wares to be stored there as the safest storage place in the kingdom. The storage of wares led to the establishment of the market for their disposal, and so has followed finance, power, prosperity, and the supremacy of the city.



The gradual establishment of this pre-eminent position for London in the Saxon era is also indicated by the number of occasions when it was the objective of the Danish invaders. Some account has already been given of their earlier objectives, beginning with Northumberland and ending with the expedition up the Itchen in 860 and the storming of Winchester. In 893 there was an invasion by shipping up the Lymne, in East Kent, to Appledore, and a second detachment with eighty ships established themselves at Milton, near Gravesend. This expedition was then concentrated at Benfleet, where King Alfred in the following year sought them out, routed them, and brought the spoil to London. A remnant retired to Shoebury, in Essex, awaiting reinforcements. In 895 one section of the Danish Army, reached Chichester from the West on its way to London. The Essex section, which had its depôt at Mersea Island, near Colchester, towed their ships up the Thames and thence up the Lea, the nearest point they had attained to the desired object. There Alfred made his famous dams which left the invaders' ships high and dry, and the invaders themselves retired overland to Quatbridge, near Bridgnorth on the Severn. While the English king's army pursued the Danes "the men of London fetched the ships, and all that they could not lead away they broke up, and all that were worthy of capture they brought into the Port of London." The eighty years following Alfred's death saw only spasmodic attempts of the Danes to extend the hold they had on the Eastern side of the kingdom, attempts which were never serious and always unsuccessful. In 980 the scheme for capturing London was revived by the landing of a pirate army at Southampton which plundered the town and slew or imprisoned most of the population, and by over-running the Isle of Thanet by the same or another army. Eleven years afterwards Ipswich was plundered, and the weak Ethelred, who had twelve years previously come to the throne, commenced the payment of tribute to the invader, called the Dane Geld "for the great terror they occasioned by the sea coast," dreading, doubtless, that otherwise his capital might at last suffer the fate intended by its remorseless foes. That the bribe was useless is proved by the fact that in the following year (992) the

c

king and his council resolved that all the ships that were of any account should be gathered together at London for a combined effort with the army to get rid of the enemy. The enemy escaped, and later fought with the English fleet to the disadvantage of the English, for there "a great slaughter was made, and they took the ship in which was the alderman, all armed and rigged." In the next year Anlaf, the Danish admiral, was able to proceed up the Thames with ninety-three ships as far as Staines, and back again to Ipswich, laying waste where he could. Though Anlaf had no English fleet to bar his way up the river, he was unable to molest London itself, whose army and wall would have been strong enough to protect the city against the invading fleet. One fact to be deduced from this incursion is that no bridge of substantial construction crossed the Thames at London at that time. The success of this raid encouraged the Danes to try again. In 994 Anlaf brought King Sweyn with ninety-four ships. The city was closely besieged and endeavours made to fire it, but the enemy were driven off, only to wreak vengeance for their defeat by plunder and slaughter on the coasts of Essex, Kent, Sussex, and Hampshire, and having eventually to be propitiated by an increase of the Dane Geld, whilst an undertaking was given to maintain the Danish army in winter quarters. The bargain was not kept by the Danes, and this period, year after year, is a monstrous record of pillage wherever there was the opportunity, on the way to London or on the retreat from the city. As the Chronicler observes, the expeditions "both by sea and land served no other purpose but to vex the people, to waste their treasure, and to strengthen their enemies."

The persistence of these attempts, the costly nature of the repeated expeditions, and the fact that the enemy troops were always directed from the coast towards London, are the best testimony that London was the coveted prize. Similarly, the fact that the sea defences were organized and prepared in London, and that for 200 years the invader was kept out of its walls, demonstrates that its owners thought it worth fighting for and possessed the resources for a successful resistance.

Some light is thrown upon London's commercial prestige in the tenth century by the fact that it had the



largest number of mints in the kingdom, and also that King Edgar, who reigned from 959 to 975, ordained that the only measure and weight which should pass throughout his dominion, were those observed at London and at Winchester.

When we come to the latter end of the tenth century we find another document of considerable interest to the historian of the Port of London, viz., the regulations of Ethelred for the tolls chargeable at Billingsgate. These regulations set out that boats coming to the wharf paid one halfpenny each and sailing boats paid one penny. Vessels lying at the wharf paid fourpence. For a ship with timber one log was taken as toll. Small vessels with fish paid a halfpenny and larger vessels one penny. Rouen vessels with wine or dried fish paid six sous and 5 per cent. of the fish. Vessels from Poitou, Normandy, and France, "showed their goods and went toll free." From Huy, Liege, and Nivelles they paid the usual tolls. And the Emperor's men, *i.e.*, the Easterlings, who came in their own ships, were held worthy "of good laws like ourselves" and permitted to market their goods in the town subject to the ordinary tolls, and were entitled to buy wool waste and three live pigs for provisions, with a stipulation that at Christmas and Easter they were to supplement tolls with two grey and one brown cloths, 10 lb. of pepper, five pairs of gloves, two casks of vinegar, one fowl out of every basket of fowls, and five eggs from each basket of eggs.

These regulations indicate developments in trade, especially with the English Channel ports. Ethelred was the first English king to marry outside the English Kingdom; his wife was Emma, the daughter of Duke Richard of Normandy, and to her influence may be attributed the growing trade with French ports and the encouragement it got from being "toll free." We have wine mentioned in this document as an article of import, and that it was coming into favour as a substitute for mead is shown by the Anglo-Saxon record under the year 1012, that the Danish army was "much drunken, for there was wine brought them from the South." Flanders is also indicated as a country trading with London, a trade which grew into the most important of all, as the centuries went on. The trade with the "Emperor's men" is recognized as one of necessities as that with France was recognized as

one of luxuries, and it was encouraged by the traders being placed on an equality with the native merchant. Blood counted for much in those days, and the Anglo-Saxon in England still felt the tie of the founders of an independent colony for the mother country. The appearance of wool as an export is another landmark in London's trade. The stipulations as to pepper, gloves, and vinegar indicate that prosperity had provided the means of purchasing luxuries. The merchandise in the Port of London was beginning to show that world character which has marked it since.

The mention of Billingsgate is the first record of any specific landing-place in London. By this time the Walbrook, which found its outlet at Dowgate, would be inaccessible to the larger Continental vessels, and as there was no tributary, with the depth of water required, nearer than the sea, the banks of the Thames would be more and more requisitioned as a landing-place. From time to time small hithes were constructed where vessels could lie on the shore as the tide went down, and the cargoes could be discharged at leisure. These hithes were not docks in the modern sense, though some of them were eventually called docks, such as Puddle Dock and Dowgate Dock. They consisted either of projecting wooden piers enclosing an area of foreshore accessible towards high water, or of cuttings into the foreshore, the sides being piled to prevent the surrounding soil slipping in. Warehouses were built round the sides of the quay so formed. In order to insure protection against river thieves these hithes were built inside the Town wall, which was erected on the river front and access gained through "gates." Of these hithes, Billingsgate was undoubtedly the first constructed. It adjoined the bridge, and it was the nearest point on the north side of the river to the ferry which plied between the city and the south side. It may indeed have originally been the actual embarking and landing-place for passengers and goods ferried across the river before the bridge was made. It remained for centuries the principal quay in the port.

With the coming of Canute on the scene a further stage in the development of the port began. His father Sweyne had at last in 1013 been able to intimidate the population of London into submission, and they had given hostages and promised tribute and forage. Ethelred retired with his



fleet and lay up in the Thames, and later went to the Isle of Wight. The death of Sweyn in the following year made his victory a barren one, and Canute, succeeding him, found himself with his army at Gainsborough, far from the coveted metropolis. Like so many of his predecessors, he first circled round his intended prey without being able to strike it. He landed at Sandwich, proceeded into Dorset, Wiltshire, and Somersetshire, eventually reaching Warwickshire in mid-winter 1015-1016, plundering, burning, and murdering everywhere. By Easter, 1016, Canute had collected all his army and brought them to his ships, and immediately after, coinciding with the death of Ethelred, set out with his fleet for a direct attack on London up the river. It is related that barred by the fortified new bridge, built presumably during the twenty-four years that had elapsed since Anlaf found a clear course up the river past London, Canute conceived and executed the bold scheme of digging a channel between Rotherhithe and Lambeth, and so was able to drag his fleet past the city to the west side of the bridge and land his army there. The citizens of London, led by the young King Edmund, courageously held out and eventually drove the enemy back to their ships, and thence to the Orwell. The Battle of Assingdun, in Essex, where the nobility of England perished, led to a compact between Canute and Edmund under which the Danish army went to their ships with their plunder and the people of London purchased their security by providing the maintenance of the Danish victors and the shelter of their ships in the port. The death of Edmund, on St. Andrew's Day, left the kingdom at the mercy of Canute.

The asset that Canute brought to the country was peace. The Dane was now reigning where before he was at worst a cruel and unscrupulous robber and at best an unwelcome intruder, and the great king did his best to reign for the benefit of his subjects. London and its trade benefited most of all. The ships that had been devoted to war were now turned into use for trading. Scandinavia, which had been scoured to provide the means of harrying and plundering England, now employed its sailors in bringing its goods to the London market, whilst by marrying Emma, the widow of his predecessor Ethelred, Canute still maintained those friendly relations with the Norman court which had been so

advantageous to the commerce of London. All the vigour and spirit of the Dane was now diverted into commercial enterprises. It was natural that the ports of York, Grimsby, and Norwich, nearer to Scandinavia, should first feel this influence and enjoy a revival of their fortunes, so long languishing during these centuries of pillage. But London, though more distant than these ports, was even more responsive to the impulse of the conditions of the new régime. Canute was crowned in London, and it was his headquarters during the periods he was in England. His repeated journeyings to and from his capital in England and his capital in Denmark fashioned a route for trade. A clear result in this connexion appears in the sudden increase of the Danish population of London at this time, due to settlements of Danes in the districts near Billingsgate which, as the chief wharf of the port, would attract near it those engaged in the work of the port. William of Malmesbury refers to the fact that at this time London had become half-barbarized by the number of Danish inhabitants, and the historian John Richard Green finds confirmation of this irruption in the conversion of London's Portmannimot into the Danish "Husting" and in the dedication of the two churches in the vicinity of Billingsgate to the Danish Saints Magnus and Olaf at either end of the bridge just then recently erected across the Thames. St. Olaves, Hart Street, not many yards away from Billingsgate, further suggests that the Danes were a predominating influence in this district. The relative position of London to the rest of England may be estimated from the proportion of £10,500 out of £72,000 found by the Kingdom as Dane Geld to satisfy the demands of Canute on his accession to the throne.

Accurately and fully to depict the history of the port in these times is, for the reasons already given, impossible, but there seems to be no doubt that it is due to the twenty years' peaceful reign of Canute, to his perception of the possibilities of the port, to the development of those possibilities through the talents of his own sea-going people, that London then reached a commercial ascendancy in the kingdom which it has never lost even for an hour since his days. The effects of that ascendancy were manifested immediately after Canute's death. Let the Anglo-Saxon



Chronicle be quoted: "Soon after his decease there was a council of all the nobles at Oxford wherein Earl Leofric and almost all the Thanes north of the Thames and the naval men in London chose Harold, son of Canute, to be governor of all England." Hitherto, the voices which were listened to in such supreme moments had been those of nobles, warriors, or ecclesiastics. Now, for the first time, commerce speaks in the great settlement, possibly partly because commerce was largely synonymous with Danish influence, but also because in London, at all events, it was beginning to be realized that the "naval men" wielded a power of far-reaching advantage to the community and were entitled to share in the making of kings.

In no instance was this power more clearly exhibited than on the occasion of the restoration of Earl Godwin to power in 1052, after his expulsion from the kingdom by Edward the Confessor. After collecting a fleet and being joined by his son Harold with another fleet from the West, by the army of the Confessor whom it had deserted, by all the Kentish men, and by all the "boatmen from Hastings and everywhere thereabout by the sea coast," Godwin eventually proceeded with the combined fleets to the Nore and thence towards London. There they moored opposite Southwark waiting for the tide to come up, and when it came the fleet proceeded through the bridge on its south side. The Confessor had only fifty ships left to him. The people of London were on the side of the great earl, and the king, giving way to the superior display of force, was glad to be reconciled, and civil war was avoided by a settlement arranged by "wise men sent between them"—the first peace in our history in which the navy and the capital city had been the predominant influences. Thus henceforth, the position of London was assured, and for centuries afterwards it was the headquarters of the navy and the chief centre for the building of ships of commerce and war.

### CHAPTER III

## The Norman Port

THE nine months' reign of Harold were full of conflict, and shipping in his connexion is only that of war. But, as Freeman points out, his reign marks a stage in the gradual process by which London became the capital of England. Harold perceived the utility of London for the headquarters of a King who was likely at any moment to be called in defence of any part of his kingdom. London was a great inland haven guarded by walls, and by a people to whom the Danish strain had added a virility not in evidence before their arrival. Freeman further points out that London was the central place from which the King could march north or south to protect his coasts, and that the wealth of the city made it an excellent point for gathering and provisioning his armies. As a haven lying far inland it was a point no less suited to be the centre of operations which might take place on land and sea alike. It may be noted as indicating the size of vessels of the period that Harold's namesake, King of Norway, brought a fleet of 300 vessels of his own with the fleet of Tostig, his ally, up the River Ouse to York, where their armies were disembarked to be destroyed a few days afterwards by the English Harold at Stamford Bridge. It may also be noted that in earlier operations the Norwegian Harold had driven the English fleet back into London, which continued to be the refuge as well as the headquarters of the shipping of the country. The Battle of Hastings on the 14th October, 1066, decisive so far as the fate of Harold and the House of Godwin were concerned, was not immediately followed by the surrender of London. The citizens offered the crown to Edgar Etheling, and for the time being succeeded in delaying William by making him cross the Thames as far west of London as Wallingford. The fortified bridge at London and the English fleet forbade any attempt to cross nearer the capital. But internal dissensions favoured the invader, and after a bargain with the citizens William was crowned at Westminster on mid-winter's day, and with





“ HERE A SHIP FROM ENGLAND ”  
*From the Bayeux Tapestry*





this event a new era was opened, one in which the community began to be organized and regulated by the King. There was the formal recognition by him of the rights of the municipality, and in particular the recognition of the trading element, in his greeting to Gosfrith the Portreeve as well as to William the Bishop. What were the duties of the Portreeve is a disputed question to this day, but Stubbs states that the word "port" in the compound was the Latin *porta*, a market-place, and not "portas," and he infers that the Portreeve was a royal officer who stood to the merchants of the city in the relation in which the bishop stood to the clergy. The conqueror's salutation to "all the burghers within London, French and English friendly," is evidence of the presence of that mixed population which has always marked London and indicates the international character of its trade at that time.

Though the greater part of William's reign was occupied in the settlement of his conquered lands and the welding together of the heterogeneous elements of the kingdom, the new régime promoted trading intercourse between the countries over which the Conqueror reigned or with which he had family associations. His arrival was followed by the immigration of many of his countrymen, and the residence of Matilda of Flanders in England brought Flemish artisans to London. Under Ethelred, Rouen had exchanged products with London. Now they preferred to live in London as it was "fitted for their trading and better stored with merchandise in which they were wont to traffic." Caen exported its stone, of which many of the new abbeys and churches were built. No question of legislation for the protection of home products had yet been conceived, and the foreign settler was as welcome as the born Londoner. The business he transacted benefited London, whatever effect his operations may have had on the home producer. Thus for a time the hospitality of the Londoner extended not only to the "friendly" people (that is, friendly to the monarch), but to the German merchants, "the Easterlings" or "the Emperor's men," as they are called in the regulations of the London trade, already quoted from Ethelred.

Though the blood-connexion of their ancestors with the English had led to the original settlement of the Easterlings

in London, it can hardly have been anticipated by those who originally encouraged them that they would become the leaders of the commerce in London, Lynn, and Boston, and retain that position for some centuries. The Easterlings first appear in Edgar's reign (959-975). They came from Cologne, Dortmund, Munster, Utrecht, Bremen, and Hamburg. They imported ropes, masts, pitch, flax, hemp, linen cloth, wax, and steel. They exported lead, tin, fish, meat, fat cattle, and fine wool. Wheat and rye were imported or exported according to the harvests of England or Germany. The Hanseatic League was at first an association of these Easterling traders for mutual protection, including military protection for merchants travelling. It eventually became a league of the towns interested in the trade. The League owned factories in London and elsewhere, and grew so strong that it was able to obtain important concessions and privileges for its members. It possessed in London a Guildhall of its own in Thames Street, the *Gilda Aula Teutonicorum*, known as the Steelyard—a contraction of *Staplehoff*, meaning a depot for merchandise. In the course of events its prosperity and power aroused the jealousy of the English citizens, and restrictions were placed on their operations to prevent undue competition with the agricultural interests, whilst they were subject to new obligations whenever the opportunity arose. In the face of the growing competition of the English and Dutch, the League began to decline in the sixteenth century. The German towns lay away from the route of the ocean traders to America and India, and the internal troubles, religious and political, of Germany increased the tendency to disintegration. The League lost its privileges in England during Elizabeth's reign, and before the end of the seventeenth century it was dissolved. Their Guildhall in London was destroyed by the Great Fire in 1666. Four years later Thames Street was rebuilt, and a new warehouse was erected on the site of the ruins, and until 1853 business was conducted there by German merchants. In that year the property was sold to the Victoria Dock Company—then just formed—as an up-town warehouse for their new dock at West Ham. It was held by that company until 1863, when it was acquired and pulled down for the purposes of the site of the Cannon Street Railway Station. Thus ended



the visible monument of the long German ascendancy in the Port of London; and while no patriot, especially at the present time, can shed tears at the final expropriation of this foreign element which more than once threatened to monopolize the trade of London, the foresight which enabled the Easterlings to perceive the possibilities of London, the enterprise displayed in developing those possibilities, and the tenacity with which they maintained their position must evoke the admiration of all who value resourcefulness and courage in commercial transactions.

One of the factors in determining the boundaries and operations of the port for many centuries was the erection of London Bridge in stone, commenced in the year 1176 and finished thirty-three years afterwards. There had been a bridge of timber for nearly 200 years previously, but who erected it is not known. That there had been a ferry from time immemorial is certain. The point in the river crossed by London Bridge is the narrowest for some miles east or west of it, and many Roman coins of the period covered by their occupation have been found on the line of the bridge. The traditional story connected with St. Mary Overy also supports what is a very patent probability. The timber bridge was continually needing repair, and in Stephen's reign was burnt by a fire which commenced in Cannon Street. It was entirely reconstructed in 1163, but Peter of Cole Church, who initiated and supervised this work, realizing that a more substantial structure was wanted, proposed that a stone bridge should be built, and in 1176 the work was commenced a short distance above the timber bridge. Henry II and the Archbishops of Canterbury assisted with funds. Stow says that the Thames was temporarily diverted to a channel between Ratcliff and Battersea, possibly an enlargement of the trench dug by Canute when he avoided the timber bridge in his invasion of London. Peter of Cole Church, who died four years before the completion of the work in 1209, was buried in the chapel on the bridge. A drawbridge was constructed by which large vessels were able to get through the bridge without dismasting. The drawbridge also served for the purposes of defence, and this was useful to Queen Mary when Sir Thomas Wyatt and the Kentish men marched from Deptford to London in 1553. Including the drawbridge,

there were twenty arches, sixty feet above the bed of the river. The arches were about thirty feet wide, with an interval of twenty feet between them.

The making of the stone bridge was an advantage in that it allowed of the spreading of London over the river into Southwark without the fear of fire or the attack of an enemy suddenly cutting off one side from the other. It promoted the use of the south side of the river for the purposes of the port, and thereby facilitated the centralization of trade. From the point of view of the protection of the country it was an immense asset in improving the national communications, whilst as it was fortified it also served to obstruct any army of the invader or rebels who might have achieved local successes north or south of London. Owing to the very substantial nature of the arches and their narrow width, the making of the Stone Bridge had the effect of a dam, and navigation of the stream through the arches was difficult—often perilous. This again was an asset in the defences of the city from the sea, but it tended to divide the river traffic from the sea traffic. Hence in the course of time Billingsgate, the chief wharf in the port just below the bridge, with the wharves adjoining it, became the resort of foreign trade, whilst Queenhithe above bridge became the centre for the up-river traffic.

Queenhithe was one of the earliest "hithes" or harbours in the port—a port within a port. While the timber bridge existed it was the principal "strand" for landing and loading goods in the heart of the city. The enclosure of the strand by piles or wall added to the safety of the vessel and to the security of the cargo, and also of the Customs revenue to be collected thereon. Queenhithe was originally "Edreds Hithe." It fell into the hands of Stephen, who farmed it to William of Ypres, subject to rents, most of which went to Queen Matilda's own hospital of St. Katharine, adjoining the Tower of London, a hospital erected in memory of two of her children and destined to be the site of the existing St. Katharine Dock. The tenancy having been terminated, it again came into the hands of the king, who handed it over to the queen—hence the name. The royal interest in the property led to its being favoured at the expense of Billingsgate, but the handicap to traffic by the obstruction of the stone bridge eventually overcame the influence of







RIVER BANK AT TILBURY  
*From a photograph lent by the Port of London Authority*



the throne, and in 1246 the farm of Queenhithe was transferred to the Corporation of London, and such trade as came there, was that which naturally belonged to it. The rivalry with Billingsgate lasted into Tudor times, when, with the discovery of America and the developments in the Eastern trades, London's trade grew into such magnitude that there was more than enough business for all the wharves in the port.

While London Bridge was being built, events were happening below the bridge far eastward down the river which were to have an immense influence in the making of the Port of London, viz., the deepening of the river channel by the gradual enclosure of the low-lying alluvial areas on both sides of the Thames.

The river banks of the Thames have been a perpetual puzzle to students of events in the Port of London. They extend from London itself to the easternmost boundary of the port in Essex and Kent. Before they were made, tracts of country measuring many square miles were submerged at high water, whilst at low water there remained only a thin channel such as is visible in the Blackwater at Maldon or in the Orwell between Ipswich and Felixstowe. The spreading out of the tide as it came up the river-bed into a broad channel left plenty of room for navigation, but what was secured in breadth was lost in depth, and for vessels of the larger size, safe sailing must have been difficult. The stream of salt water coming up in such a width must have had little speed, and there would be an inevitable tendency for the bed to silt up. Reliance for a scouring agency from the fresh water coming down the stream would be useless, as the flow of fresh water in the Thames is, except in floods, negligible in London. It is little wonder, therefore, that the Romans preferred the land journey via Dover when coming to London from the Continent. Doubtless the river route was used by them later as native pilots came into their service or their own people learnt the channels.

The making of the river banks changed all this. It converted a sluggish stream into a fast one, and in this respect a most serviceable one, as it gave free motive power at the rate of three to four miles an hour, for a period averaging six and a half hours each way. It at once deepened the river by confining the stream to one-tenth of its previous

boundaries and provided the means of scouring the bed without expense, with the result that where man had not clogged the stream by the material brought down through Town drains or thrown overboard from ships, the undredged channel of the Thames served to bring vessels of 2,000 tons up to London Bridge. Another beneficial effect from the national point of view was the rescue of fruitful soil from the aggrandizing waters.

The Romans have been credited with building these embankments. It is clear that they could carry out such work and that certain embankments were erected during their occupation of England. In his life of Agricola, Tacitus narrates the complaint of the British Chief that "our limbs and bodies are worn out in clearing woods and draining marshes." A work of the character described in the complaint—the Car Dyke—which extends from the Welland to the Witham is attributed to the Romans, one of its supposed purposes being to facilitate the conveyance of corn from the southern parts of England to the military stations in Scotland. Similarly, the erection of the old sea dyke in Lincolnshire is explained by the desire of the Roman administration to secure firm ground for their garrison in the fen districts in the neighbourhood of Boston, Spalding, and Wisbech. In these two cases there are practical motives to account for the extensive works undertaken. There was, however, little or no motive for the construction by the Romans of 100 miles of earthworks on the sides of the Thames. London itself was on ground safely above the reach of the highest floods or tides. If, as is probable, there was a station on the south side immediately opposite the ferry, this might be protected by a local embankment and the causeway leading towards Kent would be raised above high water level. Beyond these small works the Roman occupiers needed nothing. Their ordinary route for the army and its followers was along the straight hard road from Dover, which they themselves had made. If necessary, goods could go away and come by the river route, for though the stream was relatively shallow it was sufficiently deep for the small commercial vessels of that period. But there appears to be no evidence of trade utility which would account for the enormous outlay required nor has any evidence of Roman work ever been found by dock engineers



on the numerous occasions on which the river wall has been cut through or demolished when docks have been built or reconstructed.

Who, then, made the embankments and thereby made one of the chief assets of the Port of London? No direct record of the making of the works exists. The student is therefore left to inference. The outstanding fact to be borne in mind is that the erection of the banks led to an immense area of land being gained from the sea and river. The Saxons constructed embankments, and Romney Marsh lands were recovered in this way. Here obviously no question of navigation was involved: the only prize was the land reclaimed. Domesday Book contains minute descriptions of the riparian lands below London, particularly in Essex, but marshes on the Thames are never alluded to, though appearing in other parts of the Survey. The conclusion is irresistible that though there may have been local causeways down to the river, there was no general line of embankment on the Thames. It is to be noted, moreover, that all the villages of Essex mentioned in Domesday Book which are of a riparian character can be identified with villages of the same name to-day which are situated on the edge of the ground just beyond the line where high tides would reach before the banks were made. If the banks had been made before the Norman Conquest we should have expected to have read of settlements between these villages and the river bank.

There is evidence that there were marsh lands in 1135 at Stratford, in Essex, and also near Erith in 1178. In the hundred years which had elapsed since the Conquest great changes had taken place in the kingdom. Normans had ousted the Saxon proprietors of land. The Church had grown powerful and was covering the land with abbey churches and monasteries. Closer relationship with foreign countries had been established and, as already mentioned, there had been a large influx of foreign element, especially from Normandy and Flanders. Land was cultivated on a more extensive scale, and in the neighbourhood of London especially, activities of all sorts were quickened. Is it not reasonable to conclude that the making of the banks was in pursuance of schemes, gradually carried out, for the reclamation of land, and that these schemes were initiated

and executed largely by the Flemish element in imitation of work with which they were familiar in their own country? The builders in carrying out their object would not trouble themselves as to the effect their work had on the stream, nor did they realize that they were in fact performing a mighty service in providing for London one of its greatest assets as a Port. Support is given to this theory by the fact that the earliest statutes extant relating to embankments are of Henry III's reign and that they refer to laws of his grandfather Henry II, showing that the question of embankments was becoming one of public interest and importance.

It was in the reign of Richard I that the vesting of the conservancy of the Thames in the Corporation of London was recognized. The control of the rivers, as in the case of all estate of public value, had doubtless been originally in the hands of the King's local nominees; in the case of the Thames at London it was evidently the officer in charge of the Tower who was the King's representative. According to Lord Hale, the King was the conservator of all ports, havens, creeks and arms of the sea, and protector of the navigation thereof, and had a jurisdiction to deal with nuisances in rivers that were a common passage for vessels. With the accession of Richard there is the first appearance of a Mayor of London (Henry Fitz-Aylwin), and the fact that Richard granted two charters to the city—one in the fifth year of his reign and the other in the eighth year—indicates the growth of the power of the city to defend its rights and secure fresh ones. It is the latter charter which deals with the Thames. This charter is primarily concerned with the protection of the city's interests in the river as a fishery. It orders the removal of all private weirs and forbids the future erection of weirs—such weirs being tanks or dams constructed higher up the river for the illicit taking of fish. It also lays down that the keepers of the Tower of London, who had special privileges in respect of the weirs, had been compensated and that they should no longer be entitled to "exact anything of any one, neither molest or burden or any demand make of any person by reason of the said weirs." Henceforward King after King as he came to the throne, or when necessity required him to ask the citizens for money, granted charters confirming the rights in similar



language and emphasis. The rights were enforced and jealously guarded by the city until Parliament transferred them to the newly made Thames Conservators in 1857.

It should be noted that the charter of Richard I does not in precise terms confer the administration of the river upon the City of London, nor do any of the many later charters specifically confer the power. It is certain, however, from the records of the city that they exercised jurisdiction on the river not only as a Fishery Board but as a Port Authority. That they did so from a much earlier date is shown by the First Charter of James I, which charter was given in order to end controversies that had arisen. It states that the mayor and commonalty and citizens of the City of London time out of mind had exercised the office of bailiff and conservators of the water of the Thames by the mayor of the city from Staines Bridge to Yantlet, and also in the Medway, and in the Port of the City of London, upon each bank and every shore and upon every wharf. This charter also refers to the office of measurer as having been exercised by the city in respect of coal, grain, salt, fruit, vegetables, and of all other goods and merchandise sold by measure brought into the Port of London within the same limits, and enacts that such powers were to remain whether they had been exercised or not. It may be gathered from the language of this charter that Richard, in not definitely appointing the city as conservators, tacitly recognized that they were in possession as conservators at the time of his grant, and that the Royal renunciation of the weirs was merely the removal of the anomaly caused by an isolated encroachment of the Crown at the Tower.

To complete the review of the city's position as conservators in the port, it may be convenient here to anticipate history.

When Parliament was allowed to legislate on such matters the powers of the city were confirmed and made clearer. The earliest Act was passed in 1394, and in it Richard II recognizes that his progenitors had "granted to the Citizens of London that they may remove and take away all the weirs in the waters of Thames and Medway and that they shall have the punishments thereof pertaining to the King," and the Act enacts that the King grants that the Mayor or Warden of London for the time being shall have the

conservation of the "Statutes relating to these matters in the waters of the Thames from Staines Bridge to London and from thence over the same water and in the said water of Medway." The Parliament of Henry VII extended this authority to "all the issues, breaches, and ground overflown as far as the water ebbeth and floweth grown out of the River of Thames as touching the punishments for using unlawful nets and engines." In 1536 the Mayor was empowered to fine offenders who polluted the river or damaged the banks.

The position of the city did not go unchallenged, and the question of their authority was the subject of legal proceedings in 1605, when the Court of Exchequer gave judgment in favour of the claims of the Corporation. From this judgment it is evident that the Corporation had interpreted their charters as giving them wide powers of jurisdiction in the river. They had acted as water bailiff of the river, and had carried out the office of meter of coals, grain, salt, fruit, and other goods brought into the river and had levied charges for the operations. The judgment vindicated the plea of the city that London was an ancient city and that the mayor and commonalty had "for all time whereof the memory of man is not to the contrary" exercised the authority and powers which were challenged. In other words, the defence was one of prescription, and this defence was acknowledged to be a good one by the Crown lawyers. James I confirmed the judgment by granting the charter which is referred to above.

In 1797 that position had again to be defended—this time in the House of Commons. In an elaborate document prepared by the Town Clerk, five reasons are given for the title of the City of London to the Conservancy of the Thames and Medway :—

First, by prescription confirmed by the Exchequer Court in 1605.

Second, by Ancient Charters, particularly those of 1197, 1199, 1227, 1327, 1605, and 1663.

Third, by Acts of Parliament passed in 1394, 1424, 1489, 1536, and 1774.

Fourth, by reports and ancient authorities, including Davis's and Siderson's reports and the Fourth Institutes.



Fifth, by the exercise of the rights of conservancy during several centuries, including :—

- (a) the regulation of shipping,
- (b) the fixing of mooring-posts in the river,
- (c) the removal of weirs and the cleansing of the river,
- (d) the directing of the methods of removal of ballast from the river,
- (e) the repairs of the banks,
- (f) the levying of rents for projections into the river,
- (g) the licensing of wharves, jetties, mills, and waterworks,
- (h) the removal of structure encroaching into the river,
- (i) the erection and maintenance of public stairs and landing-places and the removal of private facilities of this kind,
- (j) the regulation of timber floats,
- (k) the periodical official inspection of the river,
- (l) the returning of writs of certiorari,
- (m) the holding of Courts of Conservancy and punishment of offenders, and
- (n) the regulation of the fishery.

This exhaustive list is supplemented by instances of the exercise of these powers ranging from a jury of river frontagers, called in the year 1528 to assist the Aldermen in viewing certain encroachments on the Thames to an application in 1793 from the Trinity House for permission to drive piles for the purpose of their ballast barges.

## CHAPTER IV

# General Progress of Foreign Trade in the 13th, 14th & 15th Centuries

WRITING at the close of the twelfth century, William Fitzstephen, in his preface to the life of Thomas à Becket, gives a picture of London. He writes in a spirit of exaltation on the city which had been the scene of the birth of the subject of his book, but when allowances are made for his noble prejudices there still remain facts in his account which tell us that at this period London was gaining a pre-eminent position in the world. He calls it "the one seat amongst the world's cities that pours out its fame more widely, sends to farther lands its wealth and trade, lifts its head higher than the rest." His figures of 20,000 horsemen and 60,000 men on foot fit for war in the time of King Stephen have been termed an exaggeration, and well may be so; but when he states that there were besides St. Paul's, thirteen larger conventual churches, he is furnishing information within his knowledge and the knowledge of every one else. This information does give some idea of the size of London at that time. The maintenance of so many conventual churches is testimony to wealth, and the reference of Fitzstephen to trade in this connection is testimony also that the endowments were founded by pious benefactors who had been successful in their operations in trade. It could not but be congenial to Fitzstephen to make such a record when he remembered that Thomas à Becket was the son of an opulent London tradesman. This trade was the foundation of the attractions which led to "nearly all the bishops, abbots, and magnates of England to be as it were citizens and freemen of London having their own splendid houses." Incidentally, Fitzstephen tells us that the wall and towers which had formerly bounded the city on the river-side had been gradually brought down by the action of the tide in loosening the foundations. While he commends so much grandeur and greatness he mentions as the only pests of London "the immoderate drinking of fools and the frequency of fires." These two pests were the immediate



consequences of London's progress as a port. The drinking was the result of the opportunities created by the large increase in the importations of wine from France following upon the Norman régime, and the fires were due to the presence of so much inflammable goods such as resin, pitch, tar, and rope, brought by the Easterlings from the Baltic provinces. The risk of fires from this cause was increased as time went on, until the Great Fire of 1666, which spread largely because of the nature of the contents of the warehouses on the river banks, led to a more intelligent method of construction and arrangement of the buildings of the city.

Of the actual state of trade in the port at this time and the way business was done there, few records exist. We may fairly assume that cargo vessels had not increased in size much beyond the 100 tons they were 200 years before, and that for the most part they still discharged at moorings in the centre of the stream between the Fleet River and Dowgate, where the Walbrook falls into the Thames River. It seems probable that the Walbrook was no longer used by vessels. Billingsgate, Queenhithe, and possibly Dowgate were apparently the only "hithes" where vessels could lay alongside the quay and place cargo direct on to the shore. All other cargo was transferred from ship to land by barges—then little more than large rowing boats. The principal goods imported by sea were wine and the products of the countries of the Easterlings, including the valuable spices of India brought via Russia and the Baltic. A few venturesome sailors occasionally succeeded in sailing round Gibraltar with Eastern products from Genoa and Venice, then the chief maritime ports, but the longer land and shorter sea route was for many years preferred. Corn came by river from Oxfordshire and Wiltshire, and in the time of bounteous harvests was exported to the Continent. Then and for many years afterwards the chief export was wool, and the revenue derived from dues was an important one. The cost of London Bridge—built in stone and completed in 1209—was defrayed out of a tax on wool, so that the saying arose that London Bridge was built upon woolpacks. It is an indication of the strange changes that time brings about that, whereas for centuries London's chief export was wool, to-day wool is its chief import.

We leave the twelfth century and will briefly deal with the progress of the next three centuries.

The strength of the country during these three centuries was largely given up to internal struggles and to military expeditions in pursuit of dynastic ambitions. The internal struggles were almost entirely concerned with attempts of kings and barons to obtain power at the expense of the other, or of the heads of rival families to wear the crown. The external warfare was with Scotland and France to enforce the desires of the kings of England to extend their dominions. Partially successful on occasions, the enterprises failed in the end, and every country engaged in the struggle suffered grievously in loss of life and property. The Church, moreover, had its share in the struggle for its own aggrandizement. At first sight it would appear that such times were not calculated to promote the interest of traders with whom the primary conditions of production and delivery are peace and security. The honours of war are not compatible with such conditions, and the handicap of war in commerce as we have felt it to-day was even more intensified when the trader had as much reason to dread the robber at home (such as the men of the Cinque Ports became) as the enemy abroad. Moreover, as yet the authorities had not recognized any responsibility towards the commerce of the country. It was not merely the application of a calculated policy of *laissez faire*. It was a policy of indifference as to what happened to commerce. Wealth existed to tax or plunder, according as you were friend or foe. And even though the tax-gatherer might be taxing the producer of the wealth out of existence it mattered not. The producer might even be reckoned a common enemy because he diverted labour from military to agricultural or industrial purposes. Such an attitude has survived in some quarters even in the recruiting of the civil population for the late war.

Yet, in spite of all these adverse tendencies, the trade of London grew apace. The intervals of peace gave hopes to the enterprising, and they ventured. The Church, though grasping for power, cultivated the lands assigned to it and encouraged arts. Edward I and his grandson Edward III were monarchs who, though waging many wars, were alive to the fact that fighting was expensive and could only be



carried on if backed by the development of the resources of the country. Legislation in their reigns was in part applied to the direct encouragement of trade and in part to giving it freedom to grow and flourish. Edward I, by his system of expanding villages into towns and giving them a measure of independent civic life, fostered a spirit of local patriotism which found its chief purpose in the encouragement of trade. The appointment of regular collectors of revenue not only put down smuggling, but it was a guarantee of the exactions being fair and equitable. English merchants became shipowners. Wool still remained the chief article in the list of commodities of the country, but it was as yet the raw product which was exported, and as the manufacturer was in Flanders it was natural that the chief port of shipment was London. It was in the interest of this trade that Edward in 1297 sanctioned an Act remitting the duty of 40s. for every sack of wool. It is not the least significant clause of the Act that the King intimated that he would not take the wool duty or any other without the "common assent and good will" of his people.

Edward III came to the throne in 1327. Almost his first edict was one that the Staples (which were fixed markets where alone certain classes of goods, notably wool, could be sold) should be abolished, and that foreign merchants should be allowed to come into England with their wares and sell them here. Three years afterwards he sanctioned an Act to prevent adulteration of wine and profiteering in the sale of it. Free Trade legislation was repeated in 1335, when it was more definitely pronounced that all merchants—foreign or native—who wished to buy and sell corn, wines, meat, fish, wools, clothes, and other merchandises, whatever the origin of such goods, should freely sell "to what persons it shall please them," and penalties were laid down in case of any interference with any merchant. The only restraint on business was in the case of enemies of the Crown. Edward's motive at this time may have been the increase of his customs revenue, or he may have been influenced by his wife, Philippa of Hainault, on behalf of her countrymen in Flanders. Two years afterwards, in 1337, a different action was adopted and a short Act was passed—one of the shortest and yet, in its effect on English trade, one of the most potent Acts ever passed. It simply

prohibited the import of clothes into "the lands of England, Ireland, Wales, and Scotland within the King's power" made in other places than in the same lands. The apparent inconsistency was not due to any change of policy on Edward's part, but was an answer to the measure taken by the Count of Flanders intimidated by the French King Philip of Valois to close all commercial relations with England. Though Crecy was not fought till 1346, it was in fact the first incident in that struggle in English history known as the Hundred Years' War. That the legislation was war legislation, and not merely the assumption of a narrow patriotism, is obvious from another Act passed in the same year (1337) intimating "That all the Clothworkers of strange lands, of whatsoever country they be, which will come into England, Ireland, Wales, and Scotland within the King's power shall come safely and surely and shall be in the King's protection and safe conduct to dwell in the same lands, choosing where they will." With the passing of this Act the export of wool was prohibited. At Ghent, Ypres, and Bruges the result of the double prohibitions of the export of wool and the imports of clothes was to bring their trade to a standstill and consequent destitution. Many Flemish weavers accepted Edward's invitation and came to London, there establishing their wool manufactures and laying the foundation of the great export woollen trades, which to-day in their volume and value are only second in importance to cotton manufactures in the kingdom. We need not follow this subject further than adding that, when later, Edward was able to force peace with Flanders largely as the consequence of this pressure, an Act was passed in 1344 releasing the embargo on the import of wool. But the effects on the encouragement of home-manufactured wool had been permanent. The Flemish towns had passed the zenith of their prosperity and London was already bidding for the premier position in the European world of commerce.

Several of the statutes of Edward III, passed after Crecy, relate to trade. Following upon the ravages caused by the Black Death in 1347, there is the Statute of Labourers compelling men to work for masters requiring them, but coupled with the provision that food should be sold at reasonable prices. In 1350 there is an Act allowing any merchant to come into London or other towns to sell either



in wholesale or retail. In the same year the forestalling of merchandise and food is forbidden, the penalty being imprisonment. Then there are Acts repeating the enactments of Richard I against weirs on the Thames, forbidding the King's servants to trade in wine, making provision for the proper gauging of wines on landing by the King's gaugers, forbidding the export of iron from the kingdom, and allowing the export of corn only to the King's possessions in Calais and Gascony.

One of the outstanding events of Edward's reign as affecting the future of his country, and especially London, was his victory over the French fleet at Sluys in 1340. Sluys was at the mouth of the canal which carried ships from the sea to Bruges. It was the scene of a most desperate fight, ending in the complete victory of the English. The English navy engaged consisted of the merchant vessels which had gradually been formed by the increasing trade of the country, a navy which was then beginning to displace the Italians, Germans, and Netherlands of their monopoly of the carrying trade of Europe. This was the first intimation to the world that a new power on the sea had arisen—a power subsequently to become the dominant one on this element. And the beginnings of this power were based chiefly on the marine instruments of the trade of which London was the centre.

With Edward's death began a period of decay for trade. Richard II, a boy on coming to the throne, was not then equipped for carrying out any policy of benefit for the commonweal, and unfortunately the evolution of his character produced in England the worst conditions for economical progress. The one law he passed dealing with trade was enacted early in his reign, and was doubtless prompted by the ministers who had advised his grandfather. This law was to the effect that none of the King's subjects should import or export goods in ships other than English ships. It was the first of the Navigation Laws for the advancement of English shipping. Whatever else may be gathered from it, we may at least deduce that the Battle of Sluys had led to a great increase in the out-turn of shipbuilding and that the monopoly conferred by the new Act was intended to give the English shipowners the opportunity of earning a living by handicapping their competitors.

The next eighty years were a period of foreign and civil wars ; the former in the vain attempt to preserve and extend the power and possessions in France, and the latter in the inglorious and devastating quarrels between the Yorkists and Lancastrians. Commerce naturally languished while labourers and artizans were called in to fight at home in the battles of the Roses. The most striking testimony to the state of things is the entire absence from 1382 to 1463 of any statute relating to commerce.

When Edward IV, by his victory at Mortimer's Cross, was able to get a firm seat on the throne, we find him busying himself in giving attention to the resources of his country and presenting Bills to Parliament with this object in view. The character of the legislation unconsciously shows into what a parlous state the industries had lapsed since the passing of the Navigation Law of Richard II. The new statutes were all in protection of the home producer. Thus in 1463 we find it enacted that no alien shall export wool, and another statute ordaining that corn shall not be imported until it exceeds a certain value, thus protecting the grower and in principle anticipating the Corn Laws against which Cobden fought. In the same year there was passed a statute with a preamble as to the injury and misery caused by the competition of foreign goods. Amongst those enumerated are woollen goods, laces, saddles, hardware, tennis balls, gloves, leather, knives, ewers, hats, brushes, and white iron-work. The remedy enforced was prohibition. That the remedy was soon found to have the usual disadvantages accompanying protection is shown by a law passed in the next year, where as preamble it is stated that English cloths were in small reputation owing to fraud, deceit, and falsity of the suppliers, and followed by regulations for securing honest dealing and good quality. Incidentally, the list indicates the classes of goods then coming into the Port of London, as London was then and for many years afterwards the landing-place for traffic to and from Flanders and Germany, from whose competition the London tradesmen suffered.

Edward IV's reign continued to be marked by statutes chiefly directed to the protection of the great home industry of wool growing and wool manufacture. It is not unlikely that the London Guilds, then growing into great power in



the administration of the City of London, prompted this legislation in return for favours of support of the King, moral and pecuniary. In the course of the close relations between Edward IV and the city, the city received four charters. The first and longest deals with questions outside the port except in one respect, which provides that all foreigners should contribute to the city taxes, but makes a reservation in favour of any concessions previously granted to the Hanse Merchants. The second charter gives the city the right to weigh, measure, and warehouse all wools brought to London or for the Staple at Westminster, and also fixing Leadenhall as the place where alone the operations were to take place. The third charter does not concern us. The fourth acknowledges a debt of £12,923 due from the King to the city, and in consideration of the city giving up £7,000 of the debt confers upon the citizens the offices of packing of woollen cloths, skins, and all other goods requiring to be packed in barrels or any wise to be enclosed, with the oversight of examining all customable merchandise arriving in London, either by land or water. They were also given the portorage of all merchandise between the Thames and the warehouses of foreign merchants, the garbling (a term still in use in the dock warehouses of London, and meaning the separation of good from bad) of all manner of spices and other merchandises, the office of gauger within the city, and also of wine drawer, the latter duty being the carriage of wines between the port and the vintner's cellar. These privileges substantially increased the range of the city's share in the management of the port. From being simply an authority chiefly for preserving the Thames as a source of supply for fish it became immediately concerned with the handling of merchandise, the preparing of it for sale, and the warehousing of the principal articles dealt with in the port. The City Fathers doubtless had in mind the profits to be derived from the farming of these privileges as compensation for the cancelment of the loan to the King. But the assumption of this intimate connexion with trade identified the London municipality with the interests of its port in a way that has no precedent. The placing of such duties upon the community had its part in promoting the great entrepôt trade which has been the chief source of London's greatness—financial and political. The city was

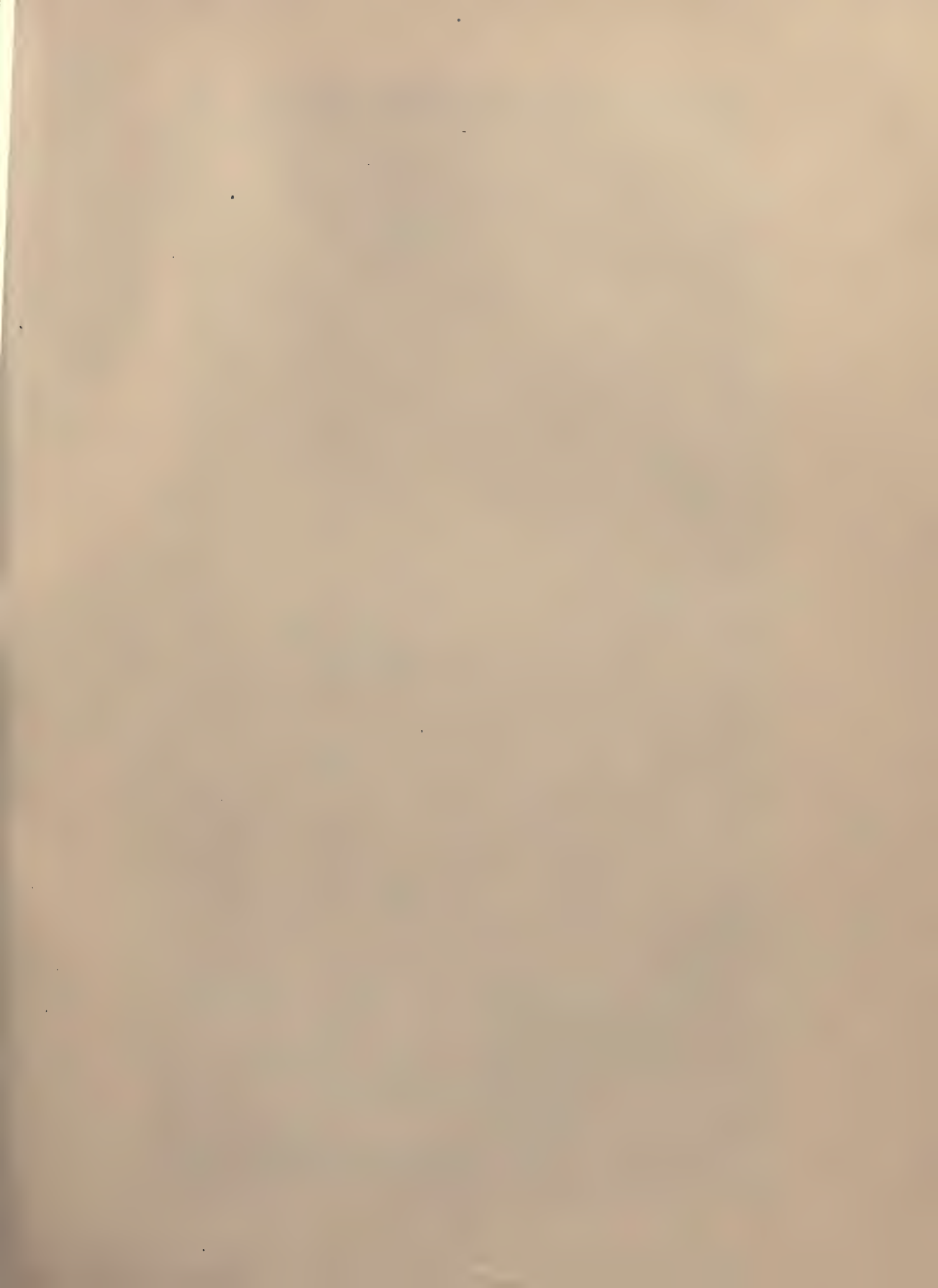
shorn of these duties when at the end of the eighteenth century Parliament set up privileged dock companies to undertake the warehousing of certain dutiable goods for a term of years. The principle of a public authority being charged with duties of this kind was, however, revived when the Port of London Authority was formed in 1909 and acquired the dock undertakings, and though the new authority has no monopoly of warehousing we shall see later that the Act of Parliament which established it permits of the possibility of the authority purchasing the whole of the warehousing interests, and as a consequence of regaining the position originally conferred on the city by Edward IV's fourth charter.

Richard III's short reign produced a statute which indicates the price he was prepared to pay for the support of the city for his usurpation, and also throws some light on business in the port. Chapter IX of the statutes of 1483 alludes to the grievances caused by Italian merchants from Venice, Lucca, Florence, Genoa and Catalonia, taking warehouses and vaults in London and other cities, and cornering goods there, whilst they spent their gains out of England. A further grievance was that the employment of foreign artificers took the bread out of the mouths of English working men and that the English employer preferred the foreigner. The statute dealt with the evil by providing that Italian merchants should sell wholesale only and that they should be compelled to employ the proceeds in buying English goods. If they did not sell their imports in London the goods were to be moved from the warehouse within two months with the option of transferring them to other ports. Foreign merchants were only to lodge with other foreign merchants or to engage in the manipulation of cloth. They were altogether forbidden to have dealings in wool. The workmen's complaint was appeased by foreign handcraftmen being ordered to leave the country unless they were the servants of expert natives.

What has been said in this chapter relates to public events affecting the Port of London during three centuries. We will close it by mentioning some of the incidents in the port itself which throw some light on the progress of business and the methods adopted.

In 1212 a fire took place in Southwark in which part of







OLD LONDON BRIDGE

From a painting by SAMUEL SCOTT



London Bridge was involved. King John in the following year commanded the mayor and sheriffs that the "half-pence which are now taken of foreign merchants shall be given to the work of London Bridge." This is the earliest reference to any responsibility of the city for the maintenance of the bridge. The hand of the Corporation appears in the Magna Charta, which it may be noted was signed by John in 1215 at Runnymede, just above the jurisdiction of the city. One of the clauses undertakes that all weirs for catching fish shall be demolished in the Thames and Medway, and another clause states that there shall be one measure of wine and one of all ale through the whole realm and "one measure of corn, that is to say the London quarter." Magna Charta also provided that merchants, foreign and native, should have safe and secure conduct to go out and come into England and to buy and sell by "ancient and allowed" customs without any "evil" tolls except in time of war.

The route by which the foreign merchant then came to London was by road to Gravesend and thence by river to the City. This water passage is believed to have been in use before the Conquest and served the numerous pilgrims to Rome and later to Canterbury. Its London terminus can plausibly be identified with the wharf referred to in that curious description of Fitzstephen where was situated the public refreshment station at which "if there should come suddenly to any of the citizens, friends weary from a journey and too hungry to like waiting till fresh food is bought and cooked, with water to their hands comes bread, while one runs to riverbank and there is all that can be wanted. However great the multitude of soldiers or travellers entering the city, that these may not fast too long and those may not go out supperless, they turn hither, if they please where every man can refresh himself in his own way; those who would care for themselves luxuriously, when set before the delicacies there to be found, would not desire sturgeon nor the bird of Africa nor the Ionian godwit. For this is the public kitchen, very convenient to the City and part of its civilization; hence we read in the Gorgias of Plato that next to medicine the office of the cooks, as the adulation of imitators, makes the fourth part of civility."

London Bridge by its reconstruction in stone in place of

timber became for centuries the principal feature in the Port. Notwithstanding this vast improvement in construction, the bridge gave constant trouble to the citizens. Within four years after its completion, viz., in 1212, fires started in buildings at each end of the bridge on a summer night, almost at the same time, with the result that an enormous number of people who had been attracted by the first fire were trapped between the two fires. Many were burnt to death but more were drowned in the rush to get into the vessels and barges which came to the rescue. In 1282 in a great frost and snowstorms, five arches of the bridge were carried away. Seven years afterwards the bridge was in such a state of disrepair that men were afraid to pass thereon and funds were obtained by special subsidy. In 1381, the Archbishop and clergy made a great collection for the repairs of the bridge. Wat Tyler and the Kentish Rebels were, however, able to pass over in safety the same year, but they had the advantage of the connivance of Alderman Sibley of Billingsgate Ward who traitorously lowered the drawbridge. Seventy years later, in 1450, there was bloodshed on the bridge when Jack Cade attempting to re-enter the City was defeated by the citizens after a battle on the bridge which lasted the whole night. In 1471 Falconbridge besieged the bridge, burnt the gate and all the houses up to the drawbridge. The swamping of barges and wherries in the passage through the bridge, often with loss of life, was almost a daily event, so that the bridge, made as a highway for the common benefit and as a defence against the foreign foe, became the scene of tragedy both on and under its surface and of contention with the enemy within the kingdom itself.

In 1306 we have the first mention of coal in connexion with the Port of London. It appears in a grant of Edward I, made in that year authorizing the citizens to levy imposts for the repair and maintenance of London Bridge, amongst which was a toll of 6d. upon every cargo of sea coal passing under the bridge for the next three years. The coal was brought up the Fleet River and sold in the adjoining lane, now called Sea Coal Lane. Two years later we learn of complaints of the contamination of the atmosphere by smoke, leading to edicts ordering the use of coal to cease; but the inhabitants ignored the orders, and coal continued to be burned. About this time the Fleet River came into



extensive use for the discharge of vessels. Twelve ships could be accommodated at once, some of them as high up as Holborn.

The year 1315 is important as containing the first record of a trading ship belonging to the Port of London. She was the *Little Edward*, and her name comes under observation through an attack made upon her by the French while lying upon the ground at Margate at low water. She was seized by the French under the impression that she was a Flemish boat. She was owned and commanded by John Brand, a citizen and merchant of London, and laden with a cargo of 120 half-sacks of wool, and valued at £1,200, from London to Antwerp on behalf of three Hanse merchants. From this it would seem that London merchants had started to be shipowners for the world at large.

In these three centuries there are other intimations in the records of London's progress as a ship-building centre. In 1337 we find Edward III prepared and manned a fleet from London in connexion with his claim to the throne of France. In 1340 another fleet was dispatched from the Thames to take part in the victory of Sluys already referred to. In the year of Crecy, 1346, what is described as the largest fleet which had yet quitted England was fitted out at Rotherhithe. Thirty years later we find John Philpot, an alderman, collecting vessels in the Thames, manning them with 1,000 men and capturing a recalcitrant merchant who had himself manned a fleet of his own in order to avenge an injury to his father. Philpot's private expedition was defended on the ground that there was no navy to do the business. Philpot captured several prizes, and was rapturously received by the citizens of London, who elected him mayor at the following election, but was reproved by the King's Council for having warred without permission of the King. For the invasion of France a large fleet was fitted out on the Thames in 1475 and the King, with 1,500 men at arms and 15,000 archers, embarked on board the fleet. Finally the year 1488 saw the commencement of the Royal Navy by the building of the *Great Harry* at Woolwich.

## CHAPTER V

# The Elizabethan Era

WITH the pacification of the quarrels of the rival Roses by the marriage of Henry VII with Elizabeth of York, the people of England were for the first time in their history able to develop their resources untrammelled by the handicap of war. Yet it must not be assumed that even then England was a desolate land, barren of all the material elements of civilization. Foreigners who came from the magnificent Italian cities could write of London in 1486: "In one street, named the Strand, there are 52 goldsmiths, so rich and full of silver vessels great and small that in all the shops in Milan, Rome, Venice, and Florence put together I do not think there could be found so many of the magnificence seen in London."

Henry VII was the first business monarch to ascend the throne of England, and the country had to wait for Charles II before getting another. Henry kept out of war, both on the Continent and in his own country. He set himself to make the land of England more productive and the foreign trade more extensive. Whilst Englishmen had spent nearly 100 years in fighting each other on the point of whether their King should be a member of the House of Lancaster or York the foreigner had stolen their foreign trade. The policy which Henry adopted to improve his foreign trade entailed an attack on the commerce of foreign countries. Everywhere he found the English merchant opposed by the competition of powerful rivals who had all the advantage of being in possession. The Hanse merchants were the most formidable through their wealth, their long connexions, and their geographical position. Their rights in England were of such long standing that they had become a recognized section of the commercial community entitled by prescription to the privileges of natives. The Italian merchants were also gaining an influence in English trade. By the enterprise of Genoese and Venetian shipowners the coveted luxuries of the East—silks, ivories, and spices—were now coming to the West of Europe by way of the Mediterranean instead of overland via Persia, the Russian rivers,



and Germany. The diversion of this trade to the English merchant was naturally more difficult to achieve, owing to the more favourable position and power of the Italians in the Mediterranean. Only in Flanders did the English producer have a chance, and that arose from his supremacy in the manufacture of cloth. Even this trade at the commencement of Henry's reign was in the hands of foreign merchants and carried across the sea in foreign bottoms. Henry began with legislation for the protection of English shipping, and to this end in the first year of his reign passed an Act forbidding claret to be brought into the country except in English, Irish, or Welsh ships. Next year he revived Edward IV's legislation compelling alien merchants to employ the proceeds of their goods in purchasing merchandise produced in the realm. In the following year, while lamenting the decay of English shipping and the inability of the navy to defend itself, he enacted that all wines and wood must come to the kingdom in English ships and manned by English mariners. In 1490, 1494, and 1496 we find regulations laid down by Parliament in respect to weights and measures, coupled in 1490 with a heavy extra duty of 18s. a butt on Malmsey wine imported by foreign merchants. A heavy export duty was placed upon raw wool and only a light one on cloth, with the object of keeping the manufacture in the country.

In 1492 Henry banished all Flemings from England and prohibited all commercial relations with them. He transferred the English cloth market from the Low Countries to Calais and recalled the English merchants from Antwerp. An unintended result of these measures was to strengthen the position of the Hanse merchants, and when this was perceived various obstacles were placed in the way of their doing business, and they were made so unpopular that they were attacked at the Steelyard by a London mob. But Protection as a measure to remedy the situation was eventually recognized as a failure. Wine and wood had become much dearer in consequence of the monopoly of shipping conferred upon the English owners. A new treaty was eventually made with Flanders, much on the old lines, and the Hanse merchants were by an Act passed in 1503 restored to their privileged position with a proviso that the liberties of London were not to be prejudiced. This proviso

is testimony to the political power of the London traders at this date.

The discovery of America in 1492 and of the route round the Cape of Good Hope in 1497 had far-reaching results on the trade of England and on the Port of London. But for the action of pirates, who stopped Bartholomew Columbus reaching England with the scheme of his brother for submission to Henry, the name of England instead of Spain might have been associated with Christopher's immortal voyage. English people were, however, slow to feel the impulse for ocean adventure.

Before Henry died an effort was made to utilize the advantages conferred upon traders by his legislation. Combinations of English merchants came into existence, the principal one operating in wool at Antwerp. The combination was too obviously a threat to the monopolies of the Hanse and the Italian merchant to have an unchecked existence, and constant friction was the result. But the English company held its own.

Henry VIII had a long reign, but its commercial interest is negligible. By his quarrels with the Pope he transferred the interest of his people to ecclesiastical questions, and the same questions agitated the peoples of Europe generally. Meanwhile, Portugal profited by the discovery of Vasco di Gama by planting colonies in India. Spain, then, for a short period to blaze into great naval power, employed the enterprise of Columbus to colonize the West Indies, and stripped Mexico and Peru of their gold. Henry VIII was far too intent on the domestic affairs of his household and Church to trouble personally about trade. No reign is so destitute of commercial legislation or interest when one considers its length and the marvellous opportunities which adventurers on the ocean were offering to the trader. In the statutes passed in this reign, whilst there is page after page dealing with ecclesiastical offences, only two laws touch questions of trade, and they are unimportant, one forbidding the sale to foreign merchants of white woollen cloth made in England until it had been on offer to an English merchant for eight days, and the other fixing maximum prices for wine.

Edward VI's statutes were necessarily meagre, but one law passed in 1552 is of interest in the admission contained in the preamble that the legislation of Henry VII had not



made wine and wood cheaper, but the reverse. It cancelled this legislation and permitted foreign goods to come in free. In 1547 a Bill was introduced into the House of Lords entitled "A Bill for the River of Thames." It was referred to a committee of their lordships, but the Bill was not proceeded with. As Mary subsequently legislated on this subject in 1555 it may possibly have been a measure dealing with the Thames watermen which is treated at considerable length in the chapter entitled "The Watermen and Lightermen."

More practical than merely sanctioning the permissive or prohibitive legislation with which so many of his predecessors were satisfied, the young king, through his council, acted as patron to Sebastian Cabot, encouraged his enterprises, and gave him a pension. Cabot founded a company of adventurers to exploit the north-east passage to India. This company in 1555 became known as the Russian Company—the first of the regular chartered combinations, with their headquarters in London, to find many imitators in Elizabeth's reign. The original object of this expedition was to find a route to India, independent of Turkish control. It failed in this particular, but it led to a large extension of trade to Russia via Archangel and the Dwina to Novgorod and Moscow.

Mary's reign, like her father's, was embittered by religious controversy and, except a measure forbidding the export of corn, beer, butter, cheese, herrings, and wood, nothing was done by Parliament affecting external commerce. But in 1555 the Act for governing the watermen on the Thames was passed. This is dealt with in the chapter on the Watermen and Lightermen.

It is in Elizabeth's reign that the sun of London's foreign trade began to blaze. The personal energy and genuine concern which she exhibited for the aggrandizement of her people was nowhere more felt than in the trade of the country. The ground had been prepared and the seed sown by her grandfather. Her father had been at best indifferent. Her brother and sister had shown only an amateur interest in the affairs that touched so vitally the material prosperity of the nation. Elizabeth had a long reign, and she filled it with untireable effort—often unscrupulous—to extend the influence of England abroad and, above all, to use the shipping and trade of England as the predominant elements in

maintaining that influence. Her chief advisers were Cecil on statesmanship and Gresham on commerce, and they were also her chief co-adjutors in implanting the Imperial idea into English commerce. Their aims were furthered by the expeditions of discovery and the piracy of adventurers, the chief of whom was the immortal Drake. Cecil, the secretary and minister to Elizabeth for forty years, was the guiding spirit in the schemes of national expansion, and he provided the cool mind to weigh things, the firm intention, the patient consideration, the statesman's broad view. Gresham, the son of a London merchant, was the financier who, by consummate skill, transferred the commercial and financial centre of Europe from Antwerp to London. The expeditions carried out by individual adventurers opened up routes which, marked on maps, correspond with most of the lines of cables of to-day. Frobisher went to the Hudson's Bay in 1576. Gilbert went to Newfoundland in 1583. Hawkins sailed to Porto Rico in 1562 and to Florida in 1565, and continued his voyage to Sierra Leone in each case. Fitch explored the Syrian coast in 1583. Lancaster took four voyages to the East. Raleigh essayed to discover Eldorado up the Orinoco. Three of the adventurers, Drake, Cavendish, and Adams, circumnavigated the globe. Adams finally settled in Japan in 1600, and founded the Japanese navy.

All these men builded greater than they knew. Raleigh's lasting work was not the discovery of gold mines in South America, but the cultivation of the potato in Ireland and the popularization of tobacco in England. The direct result of Lancaster's voyages was the downfall of the Portuguese monopolies in India and the beginnings of the British Empire in India by the inception and establishment of the East India Company. Drake's operations included successful forays on Spanish Galleons and singeing the Spanish king's beard. His permanent success was in stimulating the imagination of the English people to see the possibilities of sea rule as securing commercial supremacy abroad. He was the creator of the spirit which nerved England to defeat the Spanish Armada and thereafter to be the leading naval and commercial power of the world.

The English people were inspired not only to conquer fresh lands, but to profit commercially, and the outcome of





SIR THOMAS GRESHAM

*From an engraving by R. Woodman, after the picture  
by Sir A. More*





all these voyages of discovery and conquest was the formation of organizations to exploit the new countries. The headquarters of the expeditions had been London, and London naturally became the home of the companies, which under the Queen's charters were formed to develop them. Here it was that Gresham's skill in establishing London's financial pre-eminence was of the greatest service. Money was wanted, and the money came for the enterprises. London had been helped by the Spanish occupation of the Low Countries. That occupation led to persecution, to rebellion, and to generally unsettled conditions which made Antwerp unfavourable for the peaceful pursuits of commerce, and it is not strange that bankers preferred to keep their money in London. Antwerp's fate was sealed for three centuries when it was pillaged by the Spaniards in 1576. The destruction of the Spanish Armada in 1588 completed the chain of events which were to lead to the bringing into being of the enormous Colonial Empire of Great Britain and, in the process, to insure the dominance of London.

Out of the many companies ultimately formed there were five whose operations were to be paramount in the great commercial developments. As already stated, the Russia Company had been formed just before Elizabeth came to the throne, and its activities flourished under her patronage. The Turkey Company came into being in 1579 to trade in the Levant. The African Company was founded for gathering gold on the rivers of West Africa. The Virginia Company, named after the Virgin Queen, sought wealth in the fruitful soil of the newly discovered Continent. But the company that had the most permanent effects on the future of London was the East India Company. The trades represented by the other companies mentioned have long been shared by other ports. Liverpool and Bristol have always had a large proportion of the American and African trades. In fact, Liverpool may still claim to be the chief port for American steamships, though the modern tendency has been to shift it to London and Southampton; but the Indian import trade from its inception has been identified with London, and the hold on it is as close as ever it was. It may be recorded here that with the establishment of these companies the privileges enjoyed by the Hanse merchants in London were finally withdrawn.

The circumstances in which the East India Company was started were singular. For many years the trade to India had been principally in the hands of the Dutch, and though the Portuguese had settlements on the coasts, the Dutch had a virtual monopoly. In 1599 they tried to corner pepper, and raised the price from 3s. a pound to 6s., and then to 8s. The London merchants had been restive under the monopoly, and this unwarranted exercise of it incited them to action. They held a meeting at Founders Hall in the City of London under the chairmanship of the Lord Mayor and formed an association for trading to India, and on the last day of the sixteenth century Queen Elizabeth signed a charter to the English East India Company. There were 125 shareholders in the company and a capital of £70,000. The company became a financial success at once, and often paid dividends of 100 per cent. The first fleet dispatched by the company was one ship of 600 tons, one of 300 tons, two of 200 tons, and one of 130 tons. The total crews numbered 480 men. Many Thames watermen entered the service of the company. To begin with, the company simply operated as a trading body, and its promoters never intended to exercise governmental powers, but it was found that the protection of its factories required the presence of armed men, and following upon rivalries with the French Company there arose political intrigues. Step by step an army was formed, campaigns were fought, and further possessions were conquered. Eventually the company exercised sway over nearly the whole of India with 24,000 troops in its pay, and was transformed into a sort of branch of the British Government. The later phases of the story are well known. The present purpose is to indicate that the beginnings of the vast Indian Empire, with all that the connexion has meant to England, originated in the vigour and ability of a few London merchants at the close of Elizabeth's reign.

The tendency for ships to load and discharge just below London Bridge became more marked in these times. The passage under the arches was a difficult one even for small craft. Sailing vessels found the passage through the draw-bridge very dangerous. The current tumbling through the arches not only doubled the normal pace of the river, but made a veritable waterfall. The navigation of barges was performed by a class of watermen called "bridge shooters."



The terrors of the voyage led passengers down river from Whitehall to land at Three Cranes Wharf, in Upper Thames Street, and re-embark at Billingsgate. Doubtless the recognition of the difficult navigation of the bridge was one of the reasons that all the legal quays for the landing and shipping off of cargo were placed below the bridge.

Whilst by the granting of charters to public companies Elizabeth facilitated the acquisition of foreign possessions, her legislation bears testimony to the concern which she and Cecil evinced in the home conditions of trade. In the first year of her reign, 1558, an important statute was passed, which indicates the urgent condition of the shipping trade, viz., the measure compelling merchants with few exceptions to ship their goods in English bottoms for the following five years. Another Act passed in the same year on the question of the revenue throws an incidental light on trade practices. The Act in question laments the decrease in Customs revenues due to "greedy persons" smuggling and the corruption of the officers employed. Its most important provision was that which enacts that goods, with the exception of fish, are only to be discharged or loaded during daylight, and then only upon such quays or wharves as should be appointed by the Queen within the ports of London, Southampton, Bristol, Westchester, Newcastle, and other ports where customs officials had been resident for ten years. The quays which were appropriated in London for this purpose were selected by a commission appointed by the Queen, and were called "legal quays." They were all situated on the north side of the river between London Bridge and the Tower. The owners gradually became monopolists of the first order of merit, and the scandals which supervened upon the monopolies eventually led to action by Parliament, resulting in the dock system of London. This phase of the question will be dealt with in succeeding chapters. It may be noted here that for the time being, the regularization and supervision of sea-going traffic at appointed places in London and other ports was a most beneficial step not only in the interest of the revenue which primarily inspired it, but also in the best interests of traders.

In 1562 Elizabeth passed her Navy Act. It was an Act to provide ships for the naval defence of the realm by the

encouragement of sea fishing. Such ships were not to be taxed anywhere, and every Wednesday was to be a fish day. The drastic legislation of 1558 had evidently not had the desired effect, for in the 1562 Act, though the coastwise trade was still restricted to English ships and English ships were also to carry all imported wine and wood, the other trades were left free to foreigners. The sowing of hemp was enjoined to ensure the supply of rope. The intention of the Act is avowed as being the increase of the numbers of fishermen and mariners, and the repairing of ports and navigations. To disarm the opposition of Protestants, the Act carefully states that the fixing of Wednesday for fish consumption is not "for any superstition to be maintained in the choice of meats," and provides for the punishment of spreaders of false doctrine in this respect.

Eight years afterwards in another Navigation Act it is stated that the 1562 Act had been "a very good Act," and greatly increased shipping and the fishing industry. The foresight of these measures to strengthen the power of resisting foreign invasion by means of the expansion of commercial shipping was vindicated at the supreme test of the fight with the Armada in 1588.

The Statute Book is hereafter sprinkled with commercial legislation until Elizabeth's death. One Act forbids the importation of foreign wares, chiefly cutlery, on the ground of the harm done to the home manufacturer. Others forbid the exportation of sheep, sheepskins, leather, tallow, or hides, and compel the general population above the age of seven to wear wool caps of English make, these measures being obviously in the interest of the native clothiers and bootmakers. Another Act regulates corn transactions. But though protection of home industries is the prevailing feature of her legislation, Elizabeth did not on occasion hesitate to tax them when, as for instance, she required every vessel above 20 tons coming to English ports to contribute for fifteen years 3d. per ton per voyage and 1½d. per chaldron of coal carried. One of the last Acts passed by her touched a matter ultimately of enormous interest to both shipping and merchandise. It is Chapter XII of the 1601 Acts, and concerns "matters of assurance used amongst merchants," the first Parliamentary interference with this section of trading transactions. The Act



states that it had ever been Elizabeth's policy to encourage trade, even in the restricted conditions then existing, and it refers to the system of insuring goods and appoints a commission to decide differences which may arise from time to time.

It is in this era that we begin to find shipping anchoring below the City limits. Thus in 1513 we read of Deptford as a royal station for ships. The mention of Brook Street, Ratcliff, and of North Street, Poplar, in 1550 indicates that ships were moored in the river in these neighbourhoods. It is clear that the East India Company soon made Blackwall the headquarters for their shipping, for we find that in 1612 a dwelling house and offices were built there; and it is probable that the shipyard, dry docks and storehouses which were occupied here by the company for more than two centuries were begun at the same time. This is evidence of the progress of trade in the port. Trade, like all other progressive elements, takes the line of least resistance, and just as towns and villages in their first growth always spread along the frontage of the existing highways and only develop laterally on compulsion, so the trade of London for centuries spread down the river, only tending inland when the cost of conveyance or the general convenience made down river development more costly.

## CHAPTER VI

# The 17th and 18th Centuries

WITH the death of Elizabeth the conditions of commercial life in London for the next sixty years no longer remained favourable for progress.

The reign of James I, so far as any stimulus by legislation to foreign trade is concerned, is barren, but there was peace in his time, and peace is the best soil for trade to flourish in. An Act passed for regulating the barge traffic in the port, another for rendering the upper river navigable for barges from Bercot to Oxford, and a third for the better garbling of spices represent the total legislation of his twenty-three years' reign dealing directly with the administration of the port. A useful Act was passed in 1604 for correcting abuses in connexion with attempts of individuals to act as brokers in the City of London without the proper licence from the Lord Mayor, and another was passed in 1605 qualifying the monopolies obtained under charter by companies for trading in Spain and Portugal by a declaration that there should be no monopolies of trade in these countries, and that all subjects should have free liberty to trade there. This latter measure was really directed against London, and demonstrates how largely it was absorbing the bulk of the new trade of the country. Commerce conducted by one of the merchant companies was entirely restricted to London owing to the shareholders being almost all London citizens. It was because the other municipalities foresaw the possibility of the concentration of the whole of the foreign trade in the metropolis that they sought protection for their citizens against the monopolists. But in point of fact the legislation had little effect. By this time the new venture of East India Company was beginning to prosper, whilst the older companies—the Muscovy Company in Russia, the Eastland Company in the Baltic, the Merchant Adventurers in the North Sea, the Levant Company in the Mediterranean, and the African Company in West Africa—continued their successful careers and brought their produce to the best market, which was the Port of London.







VIEW OF THE TOWER AND THE RIVER IN 1647  
*From an etching by W. Hollar*



James granted three charters to the city, the contents of which furnish valuable information as to the position of the port in the city at this time. The first, dated 1606, repeats common form in stating that the Mayor and commonalty and citizens of the City of London have time out of mind "exercised and ought and have accustomed themselves to have and exercise the office of Bailiff and conservation of the water of Thames" from Staines Bridge to London Bridge, and thence to Yantlet Creek in the Medway. It is also stated that the city have exercised the office of measurer in respect of all coals, grain and salt, and all kinds of apples, pears, plums, and other fruit, also edible roots, and of all other merchandise coming into the limits of the port, and have taken charges for such services. This charter continues by referring to the fact that the citizens had been perturbed by their rights having been challenged and solemnly reaffirms those rights as the privileges of the city for ever. The challenger thereby confuted appears to have been the Lieutenant of the Tower of London.

The second charter, dated 1609, extends this confirmation of rights to oil, hops, soap, salt, butter, and cheese. The third charter, dated 1615, settles that the weighing of coals, as well as the measuring, was the city's privilege, and that the charge lawfully to be made should be 8d. a ton. It deals with abuses in the coal trade, notably the practice of discharging coal into barges, using the barges as warehouses and then cornering the coal supply to the detriment of the citizen. Incidentally, this practice led to large quantities of coal being dropped into the river and choking the channel. The charter compelled the landing of coals upon the quays. In the course of this charter the monarch makes a declaration that "it is notoriously known that the river of Thames is so necessary, commodious and practicable to the said City of London and without the said river said our City would not long subsist, flourish and continue." Was this the king's tactful way of placating the citizens who at this time are traditionally reported to have reminded his majesty that though he might move his court from London he was not able to rob them of their river?

It may seem strange to find in these charters the necessity for the constant re-assertion of the rights of the city. The explanation is possibly to be found in the attempts of

merchants to escape the expense of operations which they thought they were capable of performing without the oversight of the municipality. Doubtless the pressure in this direction became greater as individuals banded themselves together into trading companies. While the city's success in maintaining its rights may point to energetic effort to preserve lucrative privileges, we may also see in it the recognition by the Crown that the administration by the Common Council of the Port had on the whole been in the interest of the commonweal.

The stormy years of Charles I's reign, from 1625 to 1649, were ill-calculated to assist commercial interests. London had a prominent part in resisting the encroachment of Charles, especially the ship money-tax, which hit the London trader. It was not therefore merely the constitutional question which induced the city to support the rebellion which eventually brought the king to the scaffold in Whitehall. One curious result of the pecuniary embarrassments of Charles was that for a time the City was in possession of the Royal Lordship of Liverpool as security for loans to his father and himself, including the ferry across the Mersey, the market tolls and the anchorage and quay dues of that Port. In 1638 we find Charles endeavouring to propitiate the citizens by granting them a charter which as far as language goes is the lengthiest in the category of charters from William the Conqueror to George II. This charter confirms the powers of the city with regard to the regulation of fisheries in the river, a feature of secondary importance, since trade had become the chief question of interest in the river. It further enacts that the citizen shall hold the office of keeping the great standard and common balance "ordained to weigh between merchant and merchant," and also the office of keeper of the great balance or weight within the City of London for weighing of all "merchandize of avourdupois and also all weights whatsoever within the same City of all sorts of wares, merchandizes and things to be weighed." The most important section of the charter is that which compels every person "directly or indirectly transporting any goods, wares or merchandize by way of merchandizing in any way from the Port of our City of London to ports foreign or beyond the seas" to take up the freedom of the city, and commands the governors



of the merchant societies trading in the Levant, the Baltic, and elsewhere not to admit any persons into their employ unless they first become freemen of the city. This charter in effect countered the Act of James, under which foreign trade was thrown open to all comers, and it was a distinct score for the city. Charles's anxiety to disarm the ire of his citizens when they were discontented after the third levy of ship money put him at the mercy of the citizens, and he had no option but to throw over his father's principles. Three years afterwards, in 1641, just before the discontent which had been brewing came to a head in open rebellion, Charles made another grant of a charter to the city—this time in consideration of a money payment of £4,200. The matters in question referred solely to the port. There is a confirmation of the earlier grant of Edward IV of the right of packing and portage of goods in the port, and a new grant of the right of scavage—that is, the survey of goods belonging to aliens for the purpose of ascertaining their character in relation to customs duties; there is also a grant of balliage. The meaning of the latter term is uncertain. Its literal interpretation is a toll for delivery by water, and the service probably related to export goods, whilst scavage was applicable to import goods. Confirmation of this distinction is given in the schedules attached to the charters, where there is a scavage table of rates inwards and a balliage table of rates outwards. There is also a table of package rates and of portage rates which the city was authorized to charge. The list of goods imported is a comprehensive one, and indicates the world-wide trade then carried on in the port. But the absence of tea, coffee, and sugar from the long list shows Londoners could then live without these articles.

Whilst this charter emphasized the power of the city to exact their rights from their king, it could do nothing to stop the consequences on their trade of the unhappy events then impending. The struggle between the Parliament and the king diverted the energy of the city to maintaining rights even more sacred and valuable than those of scavage or package, and commerce languished on the Thames. The Dutch were not slow to take advantage of the position, and soon England was completely outstripped on the seas, both in merchant and naval shipping. In this

way the Dutch were getting their own back for the reverse which they had in India by the establishment of the East India Company.

On his appointment as Lord Protector, Cromwell determined to challenge this supremacy, and, by a strong naval policy, combined with a thorough administration of the Navigation Acts, which forbade English merchants carrying goods in any ships but English ones, was able to stem the tide. But the internal disorders and his short reign prevented him from achieving anything like the end he had in view. Nor was the intensely sectarian atmosphere of England calculated to foster commercial pursuits. The best that can be said of Cromwell in this connexion is that he made the name of England feared and respected, and thus ensured the safety of his merchants abroad. It was left to his successor Charles II to revive the commerce of England. His reputation for profligacy has blinded the public to a fair estimation of his performances as a king. His peaceful policy dictated by personal bribes from the French, had as compensation the usual effects of allowing the delicate plant of trade to flourish. But, apart from the base influences that worked upon him, Charles had a real interest in trading matters, and loved commerce. His brother James shared his tastes, and is alleged to have spent half of his time as Duke of York on business enterprises in the city. Bearing no malice against the city which had been the chief instrument in dethroning his father, Charles II felt no difficulty in confirming all the rights of the corporation in relation to the Port of London and everything else. Whilst the statute books in the time of his father and Cromwell are destitute of legislation affecting trade, almost every year of his reign saw some measure touching its interest. In 1660, a month or two after he came to the throne, we find a Revenue Act with carefully drawn regulations and differential duties on goods designed to handicap native trade as little as possible. Yet it provides that foreign merchants shall be well treated. The same year an Act for the encouragement and increase of shipping was passed stipulating that no goods should be imported from the colonial plantations except in English ships, and that aliens were not to be merchants or factors in the plantations. Goods of foreign origin were to come





ST. PAUL'S FROM THE RIVER  
*After Vischer*





direct from the place of growth in English ships. Coastwise goods could not be carried in any vessel owned by an alien unless he was naturalized. Three-fourths of the mariners in vessels trading to Russia and Turkey were to be English. The prohibition of the export of wool was revised in order to encourage the cloth industry. The celerity with which this legislation was passed after Charles's accession would almost suggest that the scheme was in Oliver's pigeon-hole. The year 1662 saw several measures all on the same subject. There is an Act for preventing frauds on the Customs, which contains a provision that no ship is to occupy more than three days coming from Gravesend to London without staying at a wharf, indicating that smuggling was going on or suspected across the Kent and Essex marshes. The building of armed and larger ships was practically subsidized by placing higher duties on vessels of less than 200 tons, and not armed with sixteen guns. Another Act strengthens the powers of the tribunal appointed under Elizabeth's Act to deal with insurance matters. A third regulates the butter trade, stated in the preamble to the Act to be one of the principal commodities exported. In 1663 there is another Act "for the encouragement of trade" (the phrase constantly appears in these Acts of Charles II) by allowing the export of grain and corn when low prices are reached, the idea being to stimulate agriculture. Next year the coal trade is regulated in the interest of the consumer. Then later there is an Act for the encouragement of the Baltic trade and the whale fisheries in Greenland. The whale trade was by this time a considerable and profitable trade, giving employment to many seamen, but it had decayed in England. The Act remitted all duties on oil, blubber and fins, and gave a bounty on oil and fins imported. The wool traders had their turn in 1677, when Parliament passed a law that the dead should be buried in woollens. One important venture—still a prosperous undertaking, and the only survivor of all the old exploiting companies—which received the support of Charles by the grant of a charter was the Hudson's Bay Company. There had been expeditions by individuals in the Hudson Bay district in pursuit of furs and there appeared to be an opening for a combination to develop commerce in the district. The royal brothers were persuaded to encourage

the scheme, and the Hudson's Bay Company received its charter in 1670. The Duke of York was the first stockholder, and had £300 of stock which was presented to him by the governors, possibly in gratitude as a consideration for his good offices in securing the charter. A vast territory, nearly one-third of North America, was placed under the company's control with a monopoly of trade and with power of life and death over every one. Its first three governors are all historical names, viz., Prince Rupert, the Duke of York, and the Duke of Marlborough. The story of the Hudson's Bay Company is not chequered with incidents such as marred the administration of the East India Company, but it was certain that such powers as they exercised would not be allowed to continue indefinitely. It is enough to say here that the Dominion Government of Canada has displaced the Hudson's Bay Company as the responsible authority in their territory and that this great London company remains a trading and land company—the oldest and one of the most prosperous of London enterprises.

The first mention of a dock on the Thames as it is understood to-day appears in Charles II's reign. Pepys refers to it in his diary under date of the 15th January, 1661, when he relates that he went by water to Blackwall and viewed the dock and the new wet dock "and a brave new merchantman which is to be launched shortly"—the *Royal Oak*. Blackwall had been adopted and remained as the port headquarters of the East India Company's operations. The *Royal Oak* was one of their ships being built in their yard there. The dock referred to was a dry dock of which there were then several on the Thames for the repair of their ships. The new wet dock was a small dock of one and a half acres in extent for vessels fitting out after launching. It had no connexion with the landing or shipping of goods. Its interest to us is that it was the first recorded wet dock with gates on the Thames. There are to-day locks in the docks of London and elsewhere covering as large an area as this dock, and the same may be said of the main deck of several steamers in the American trade. The dock was eventually absorbed in the Brunswick Dock, built at Blackwall in 1789.

The plague year of 1665 brought disaster to the port



not only because of the restriction of intercourse due to the plague, but because of the blockade of the Thames by the Dutch during that year. Colliers had difficulty in reaching the Thames owing to the blockade. Those which were successful in getting through were not allowed into the pool, which was deserted, but they were discharged below Deptford. Great quantities of coal were delivered at Greenwich and Blackwall, and piled up there, and the coal was brought away by lighters after the vessels had left so as to avoid any communication between the seamen and bargemen.

The fire of 1666 put the port into a worse case. The fire began in Pudding Lane, within the precincts of the port, and without exception every warehouse, wharf, and building on the north side of the river from the Tower to the Temple Church was destroyed. In effect, the fire wiped out practically the whole of the wharf and warehouse accommodation in the port. Brandy, pitch, resin, and sulphur were then stored promiscuously in warehouses with no effective separation, and the line of contiguous wharves on the Thames, filled with such combustible goods, assisted by the east wind, was mainly responsible for the vast destruction.

The Act passed in 1667 for the rebuilding of London shows that the lesson of the fire was not lost. New building regulations were laid down with reference to party walls, and it was enacted that no building should be erected within forty feet of any wall, quay, or wharf adjoining the river from the Tower Wharf to Temple Stairs. To prevent inundations and for improving the gradient in Thames Street, the level of that street was raised by three feet. An imposition of 1s. a chaldron on coal brought into the port supplied the funds for the rebuilding of London at the public expense. The tax so imposed was maintained until the year 1889.

The year of the fire saw an improvement to the Fleet River. The stream was dredged sufficiently to allow craft drawing five feet of water to get up to Holborn Bridge. This stream served the purpose of acting as a sort of back entrance to the city, where barges could discharge coal and other goods in relief of the accommodation on the Thames, but, as none of the wharves on it were legal quays, foreign goods could not be landed there.

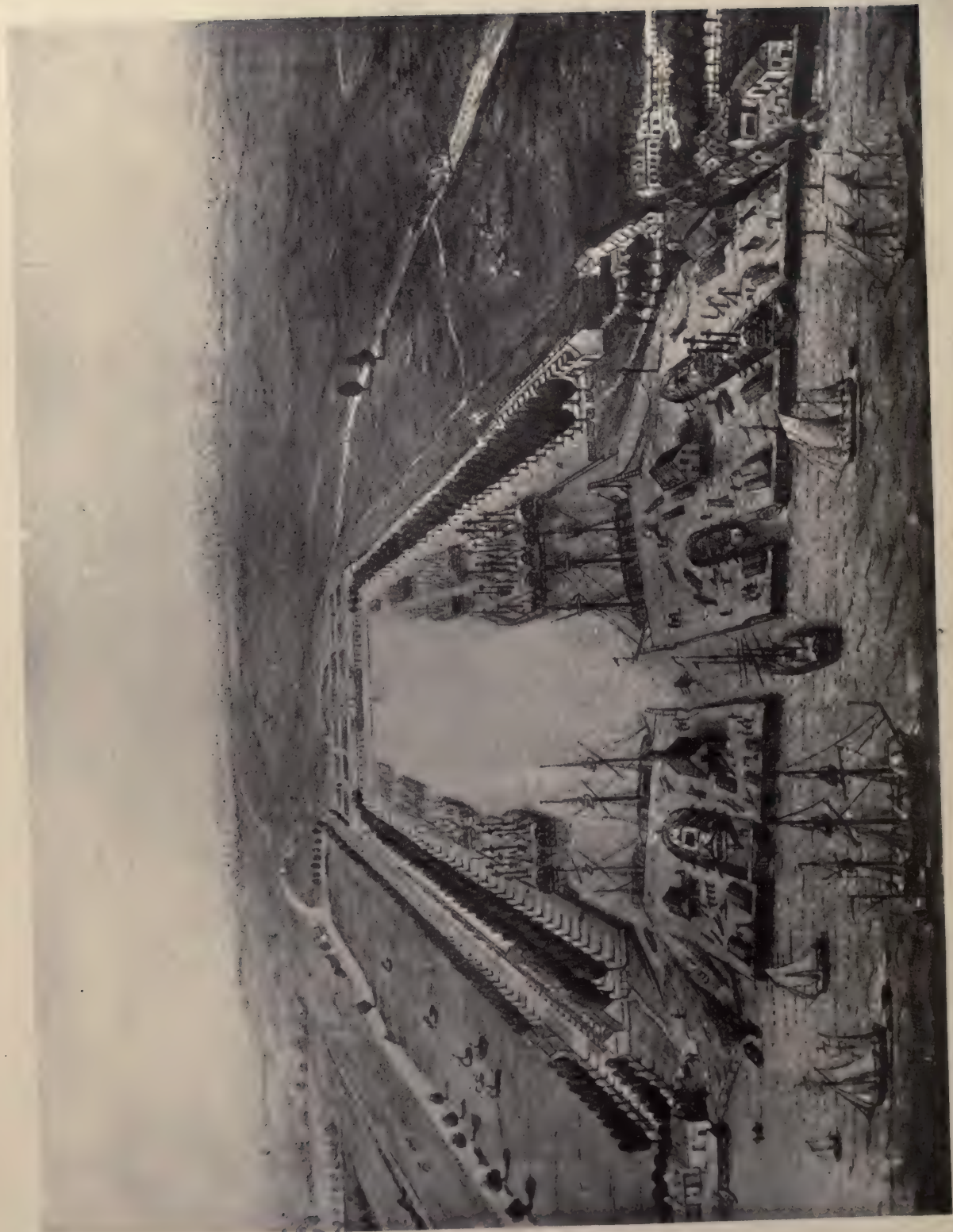
In June of the same year the port suffered its first foreign invasion since the fleets of Canute sailed up the river in 1016. In the course of the fight, when the English fleet was beaten, the Dutch fleet reached the Medway, destroying the English ships and beating down East Tilbury Church. They tried again six weeks afterwards, but were totally routed. Undeterred, a third invasion was attempted in June, 1667, with eighty ships, some of which reached the Lower Hope, others destroyed Sheerness and burnt several ships at Chatham. The measures of defence included a bridge of up-river barges across the river at the Hope for the purpose of moving troops and horses between Essex and Kent—a scheme to be imitated in 1914 on the declaration of war with Germany. Other measures taken were the sinking of nine ships at Woolwich and four at Blackwall and other places. Light on the panic-stricken state of the administration at the time is shown by Pepys' bitter comment on the mismanagement which for this purpose sunk ships loaded with merchandise, including one of the king's ships filled with stores for the fleet and a merchant ship with £80,000 of cargo on board. A fourth invasion took place on the 23rd July, but was beaten off triumphantly. No other attack by water has since been made on the port. The great European War has, however, brought repeated attacks on London by Zeppelin and aeroplane, in which one of the avowed objectives has always been the docks and warehouses in the Port of London, and the reports of the invaders have almost invariably stated that extensive fire and other "good results" have been observed. It may here be placed on record that the total value of the damage done to the property of the Port of London Authority by the raids so boastfully announced to the world was under £200, and that in no case were the operations of the port interfered with for a single moment.

It could not be expected that in the turmoil of the short reign of James II commercial events had any importance in the Port of London, and it need only be observed of him that he found in the port the necessary facilities for leaving his country for his country's good.

William III was pre-occupied with campaigns on the Continent on behalf of causes which were not British causes. Nor could he be expected to cultivate the commerce of England,







HOWLAND GREAT WET DOCK, ROTHERHITHE, 1700



when its chief rival was that of Holland. Much of his legislation was in restraint of trade, but there were Acts for the encouragement of the whale fisheries in Greenland and of trade with Newfoundland. The recruitment for the navy was most in mind by the measures for this and other fishery legislation. One of such measures was for making Billingsgate a free market for fish and (with a few exceptions) for the prohibition of importations of fish in foreign ships. One of the exceptions was live eels, and this was doubtless a concession to Dutchmen. Consignments of live eels have continued since to arrive in the Thames regularly, and the boats, resembling those of William's time, are still employed in the trade and are moored opposite the Custom House at the same berth as they have occupied since the seventeenth century.

One enterprise in the port was started in the reign of William III, which in almost its original form survived until the end of the nineteenth century, viz., the Howland Great Wet Dock. As this was for upwards of 100 years the largest dock in the port, some details of its inception and history are here recorded. The Howland Great Wet Dock was named after a family settled in Streatham, to whom the property originally belonged. In 1695 Elizabeth Howland, daughter and heiress of Sir Giles Howland, married a Marquess of Tavistock (the bridegroom was only fifteen years old), son of the celebrated Lord William Russell, and it was one of the terms of the marriage settlement that the Howland property passed to the Russells. A petition was presented to the House of Lords setting forth that a sum of money had been laid out for the making of a dry dock at Rededriffe (Rotherhithe) and that the petitioners were well advised that the making of a wet dock would not only be a great improvement of the estate, but of use to the public, and praying leave to bring in a Bill to enable them to raise and lay out moneys for making such a wet dock. Leave was given, and the Bill was read the first time on Sunday, the 15th February, 1695, and received the Royal Assent on the 10th April, 1696. The actual date of the completion of the docks is unrecorded, but it is known that it was in use in 1703, and that a second dry dock had been added meanwhile. The view of the dock given is dated 1700, but it seems probable that the date

was later than that year. The area of the dock was about ten acres. The lock was 44 feet wide and 150 feet long. When full at spring tides there were 17 feet of water available over the sill of the lock, enabling third-rate ships of the navy to be docked there. The owners claimed that upwards of 120 sail of the largest merchant ships "without the trouble of shifting, mooring or unmooring any in the dock for taking in or out any other." A computation was made that when full the dock held 288,712 tons of water, "being much larger than the famous bason of Dunkirk or any pent water in the world." A feature which was specially dwelt upon by the owners was the "mast crain for taking out and setting in masts in ships in the wet dock which answers the end of an hulk with proper pits and crab for careening three or four ships at once." The operation of masting a vessel was then a critical one, often causing serious accidents. A great step forward was made, when, at the end of the eighteenth century the work was done by means of a lofty tower erected in the Brunswick Dock, Blackwall, with a crane which overhung the ship being masted.

The site chosen for the new wet dock was then out in the country, and a considerable distance below the Pool, where merchant shipping then discharged and loaded. The reason for favouring the site is not disclosed, but doubtless its attractiveness lay in its proximity to Deptford Dockyard and the consequent opportunity of supplementing the facilities given there. The picture shows no warehouses for merchandise, and it is exceedingly doubtful whether the discharge and loading of ships would have been permitted at the time of the construction of the dock, having regard to the unwillingness of the legal quays to suffer any infringement of their privileges. There were, however, plenty of appliances for the repairing of ships, and the hint of the convenience of the Dock for His Majesty's ships points to Government work being the object of the scheme. Possibly the influential connexions of the lady owning the property led to the suggestion of making the dock and assisted in obtaining custom from the Government when it was constructed.

That the enterprise needed some advertisement of its value is shown by the way the proprietors took advantage of what happened during the great storm of the 27th



November, 1703. They announced by bulletin that on that occasion all the ships in the river which rode at chains or their own moorings were forced adrift and "confusedly driven on the north shore where some were left and most received great damage." In the new wet dock there was only one vessel injured, some trifling damage to her bowsprit, and this "was in a great measure imputed to too 'secure a negligence in the persons who moored her there.'" Trees had been planted round the dock, intended to break the force of the wind (the same protection was provided for the Brunswick Dock, erected 80 years afterwards), and it was pointed out that even without the somewhat questionable protection of full grown trees, bare of leaves, the shipping in the dock had ridden out the gale triumphantly. Another advantage of the dock pointed out was the avoidance of damage from the moving ice in the river during hard winters, and the security from fire, "there being proper cook rooms provided on shore and no fire suffered on board, also the lower cost of keeping ships in the dock, which anyone may easily evince if he will calculate the wearing their cables, or the charge of the chain, the frequent shifting of their moorings, and other necessary incidents, which do and will happen in the river and compare them with the moderate rates wet docking is by this work reduced to."

What commercial success was achieved by the Howland Great Wet Dock does not appear on the records available, but if it were ever achieved, it probably waned, as the property was sold in 1763 to Messrs. John & William Wells, whose firm were later on associated with the Brunswick Dock, another dock made at Blackwall in the year 1789. Messrs. Wells adapted the Howland dock for the purposes of the whaling trade. This trade which had been captured by the Dutch after being established by the British, had been revived in Great Britain by the payment of a bounty of 40s. per ton, and by 1787 there were 255 vessels engaged in it. Houses with boilers and tanks were erected in the Howland Dock for the extraction of oil from the blubber, and the name of the dock was appropriately changed to the Greenland Dock. In 1806 the dock was sold to Mr. William Ritchie, and as the whaling industry had declined, gradually became the entrepôt for timber deals and corn

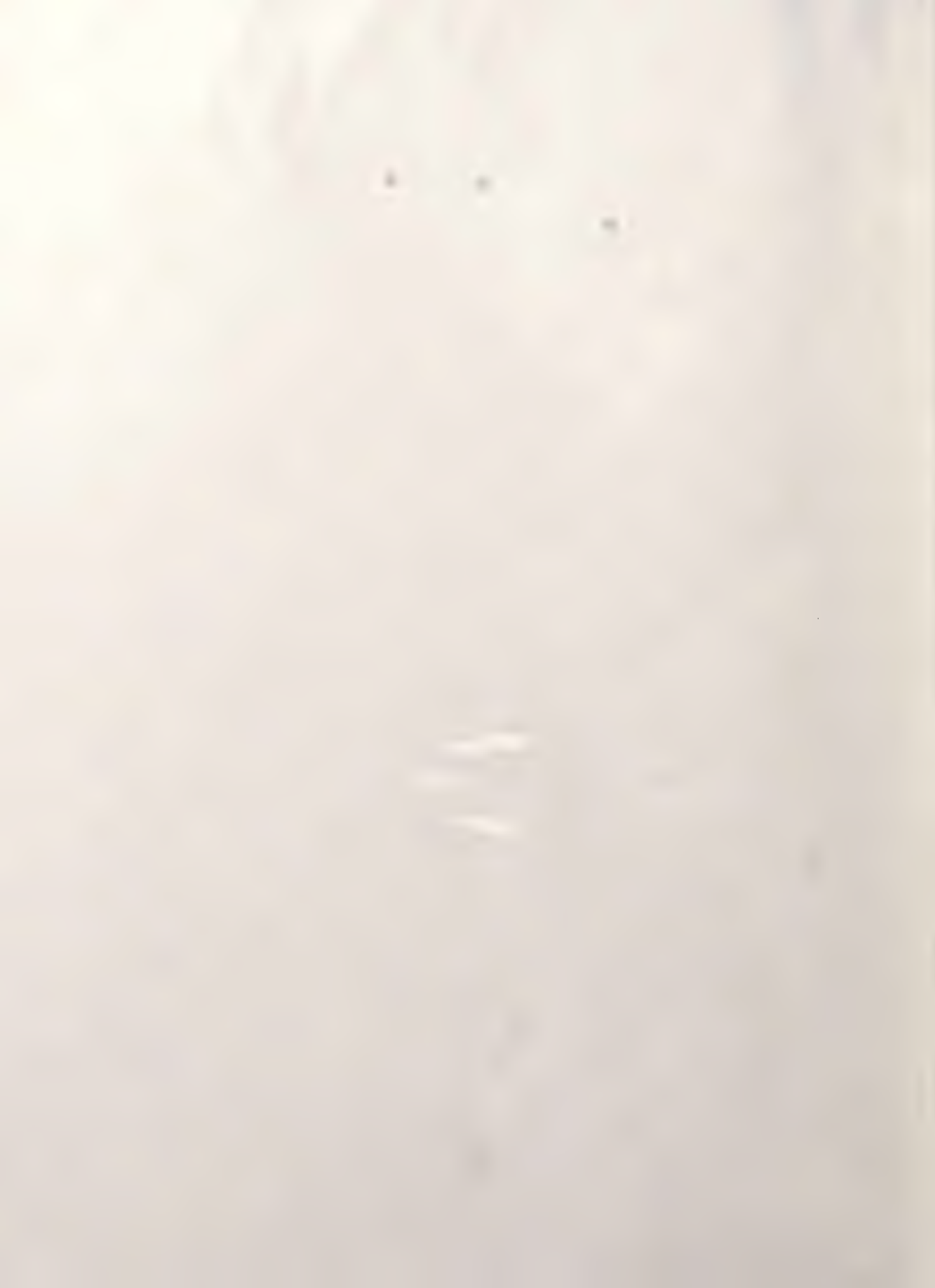
when these trades developed. Its name was changed again, becoming the Commercial Dock. The dock was eventually merged into the undertaking of the Surrey Commercial Dock Company, whose system will be described later on. It may, however, be mentioned here that when the reconstruction of this company's system was carried out at the end of the 19th century, a new dock was made, which absorbed the site of the Commercial Dock, and the name of Greenland Dock was applied to the enlarged dock.

The Brunswick Dock just referred to was a private venture of Mr. Perry. He began in March, 1789, the construction of a basin at Blackwall, chiefly for the accommodation and protection of the ships of the East India Company. Though he named it in honour of King George III, the dock was commonly called Perry's Dock. It had an area of about eight acres, and was divided into two parts, each part having its own entrance. One part was intended to receive about thirty of the largest East India ships, and the other an equal number of smaller vessels. Though the facilities given were mainly for the masting and fitting out of vessels, one quay was supplied with cranes for landing guns and heavy stores, and there were warehouses for blubber and whalebone.

If the energies of the statesmen who advised William's successor were equally absorbed in war abroad, Blenheim Palace and the hundred churches Queen Anne built in London appear to be the chief permanent result of her reign. Two measures, however, affecting the subject of this book were placed on the Statute Book. One was the Act passed in 1708 for the construction of a dock at Liverpool, which was the first of the series of magnificent works which have made Liverpool the only rival of London as the great port of the British Empire. Liverpool, though then far below the capital in wealth and importance, had been found to be of great importance to H.M. vessels and trade in general, and the 1708 Act specially recognizes this fact, and also Liverpool's utility to the State in breeding and employing great numbers of skilful mariners. The dock was sanctioned to remedy the conditions which made the use of the Mersey dangerous to ships and goods, and to the lives of the mariners. For this purpose Parliament









sanctioned the making of the dock and the buoys and lighting of the channels by the Mayor and council of the borough, and they were empowered to charge every vessel entering or leaving the port certain dues in order to supply the funds for maintenance and interest. Vessels trading to near foreign ports were to pay 8d. a ton; to Russia, Spain and the Canaries, 1s. a ton; to the Mediterranean, Africa, America and Asia, 1s. 6d. a ton. Power was given to the borough to let the "sides and brinks" of the docks for building cranes, but the cranes were to remain the property of the borough. The dues were authorized for twenty-one years when they were to be reduced to one-fourth. Vast changes have taken place in the circumstances of the Port of Liverpool since this simple Act was passed, but it is referred to here as the first dock legislation relating to publicly-owned docks in the Kingdom. When we come to the legislation for the first public dock systems in London we shall see what a different problem was before Parliament and how differently it was solved.

The other Act of Queen Anne's reign referred to dealt with the breach in the Thames river wall at Dagenham, which had occurred on the occasion of a high tide on the 17th December, 1707. History relates constant irruptions of the tidal waters into the Thames river wall. The wall at Dagenham had been a particularly weak section. There was an inundation in 1376 when the bank was broken into, followed by others in 1380 and 1381. Repairs were effected after each inundation by the landowners. There were more serious inflows in 1594 and 1595, and the whole of the neighbouring marshes remained subject to the water coming in and subsiding twice a day. The scour thus caused had the effect of deepening the river where it entered and left the marsh, and of making a deep hole of some 50 or 60 acres in extent inside the river walls. The soil so displaced was carried into the river and threatened in course of time to make a bar across the river. Nothing was done for twenty-six years. Then in 1621 the Dutch engineer Vermyden was engaged to repair the wall. He did his work effectually. But as the result of the indolence of the marsh bailiff in allowing the sluice to get out of order, the inundation of 1707 took place overflowing 1,000 acres of the Essex marshes, and doing such mischief that the cost of reparation, estimated

at £40,000, was beyond the resources of the owners of the land to find. Had the question been merely one of rescuing the lands from the floods, it is possible that the public purse would not have been applied to, but the quantities of earth brought into the river by the breach had by 1713 caused a shelf to grow up near the mouth of the breach, which reached half way across the river, and was nearly a mile in length. The consequent hazard to navigation was considered to be so menacing that Parliament took the question in hand and passed an Act appointing trustees for the repair of the breach. The funds were obtained by the imposition for ten years of a special due of 3d. per ton on all vessels coming from foreign ports and 3s. per voyage on coasting vessels. Colliers had to pay 1d. a chaldron on the coal carried. The works carried out by the trustees have stood the test of two centuries. The deep water in the river caused by the scour has proved to be permanent, and the modern owners have taken advantage of the opportunity afforded by this fact to construct wharves where H.M. ships and less pretentious craft have found berthing accommodation. The pool inside the wall also remains. A scheme was launched in the seventh decade of last century for converting the pool into a deep water dock, it being contended that the saving in excavation would make dock construction economical. The scheme received Parliamentary sanction in 1880 but was not proceeded with. The prospects of raising the capital required were spoiled by the promotion of the Tilbury Dock scheme in the following year, and the events supervening upon the venture at Tilbury made any developments in dock enterprises on the Thames unlikely to attract the public for many years to come, and the scheme is for the present abandoned.

The second quarter of the 18th century was a period when free play was given to commerce to develop naturally. Hitherto commerce had either been fostered by legislation of a protective character for home industries by the penalization of merchants of other countries, or it had the questionable stimulus derived from successful war or piratical expeditions. For the first time in English history peace was actually the chief principle in the foreign policy of the country. Its exponent was Sir Robert Walpole, who was the head of the Government from 1721 to 1742. It does not





VIEW AND HUMOURS OF BILLINGSGATE, 1736  
*From a Print by A. van Haecken*





need argument now to show that peace is the only condition upon which a world-wide trade can be built up. If no other evidence were available the enormous advance of Germany's trade between 1870 and the catastrophic year of 1914 must convince even those who most lightly treat the subject that peace is good for business. It was indeed on the resources accumulated by Walpole's policy of peace that the two Pitts financed their wars, just as Germany's capacity to endure in the terrific struggle now closed was due to the undisturbed economic activities of forty-four years of peace. Walpole's policy was not only a peace policy, but one in which the country enjoyed the nearest approach to free trade for the 100 years following his retirement from office. In the first year of his ministry, the King was made to say in his speech to Parliament that "we should be extremely wanting to ourselves if we neglected to improve the favourable opportunity given us of extending our commerce upon which the riches and grandeur of this nation chiefly depend. It is very obvious that nothing would more conduce to the obtaining so public a good than to make the exportation of our own manufactures and the importation of the commodities used in the manufacture of them, as practicable and as easy as may be." The promulgation of this doctrine was followed by its being put into operation. In the session of Parliament following the speech, the export duties were removed from 106 articles of British manufacture, and from import duties on thirty-eight articles of raw material. Later, Walpole also removed restrictions on colonial trade by allowing certain colonies to export their produce to other countries than the home country. In answer to the narrow view that such trade was lost to England, Walpole replied that the greater the prosperity of the colonies, the greater would be their demand for English goods and that this was the true way of turning the colonies into a source of wealth to a mother country.

While adopting the broad principles of facilitating universal commercial intercourse, which brought immediate benefit to the ports, Walpole endeavoured to give a more definite encouragement to the entrepôt trade, particularly of London, by the introduction of his Excise Bill. It was a proposal to turn the Customs duty on tobacco and wine into an Excise duty payable only when the goods were

taken into consumption. There was then no such bonding system as is common now in every modern port. Duties had to be paid on the arrival of the goods from abroad whether the goods were required for consumption at once, or whether they might be held for re-exportation. The effect of the system was often to make the working capital of merchants far greater than was required to finance the purchase of his goods, and it also discouraged goods being stored in London, which might otherwise come there, on the chance of sale to a foreign customer. The system thus placed serious obstacles in the way of London being an international market. The advantages of a free port had been realized in Holland for many years and had helped the Dutch, though handicapped with low lying and unfertile soil, to become the most prosperous country in Europe. Walpole defended his project on the grounds that it would help to put down smuggling frauds and that collection would be far cheaper to the revenue, but he relied chiefly upon the argument that it would tend to "make London a free port and by consequence the market of the world."

His benevolent and far-seeing designs were thwarted by the opposition of the interests who profited by the existing system. The country was incited almost to madness against the measure in a campaign of misrepresentation, calumny and prejudice, no little part in the outcry being fomented by Walpole's enemies in Parliament. Though the first resolution on the Bill was carried by a respectable majority the feeling of the country had been so worked up that Walpole dropped the Bill, nor was it until many decades afterwards that responsible ministers could be found to re-introduce the scheme.

It is not until the 18th century that any reliable information as to the extent of trade in London is available. In the previous centuries the state of things has to be inferred from the conditions under which trade was carried on. Even in the 18th century the sources are fragmentary and irregular. From such returns as are open to us one fact stands out beyond all others at the beginning of the century, and that is the predominance of London over all other ports in the Kingdom. In 1700 the total imports of England were valued at £5,970,000, of which £4,785,500 related to London, or upwards of 80 per cent. of the whole. Of the



values of £7,302,700 exported from England, London answered for £5,388,000, or nearly 74 per cent. The total of the imports and exports show London to have had 77 per cent. of the entire foreign trade of the Kingdom.

By 1737 Walpole's policy had begun to show a marked effect, and there had been a large general advance, but the outports had gained most of the additional trade. In that year, the total foreign trade of England was £18,914,000, of which London's share was £12,698,000, a reduction of London's percentage from 77 to 67 per cent. It is noteworthy that the great increase had been in exports, the object which Walpole had aimed at in his legislation of 1721.

A return of ships arriving in the Port of London from foreign ports in 1728 shows that 1,839 were British, and 213 foreign. Coasters which were chiefly colliers from Newcastle, numbered 6,837. The total number of vessels arriving in that year was therefore 8,886.

The registry of shipping in 1732 shows that there were 1,417 ships belonging to the port, with a total tonnage of 178,557, or an average of 126 tons. The largest vessels were the *Prince Frederick* and *Prince William*, each of 750 tons, the *Prince Augustus*, of 495 tons, and the *London*, of 490 tons. The smallest were the *Annie*, of 25 tons, the *Charles Stoop*, of 18 tons, and the *Bachelor's Adventure*, of 5 tons. The small vessels were sailing barges trading to Faversham and Ipswich.

The fall of Walpole was followed by an era of continuous wars. In Great Britain itself there was the Pretender's rebellion, and on the Continent, campaigns in Germany. The conquest of Bengal by Clive, the conquest of Canada by Wolfe, the American War of Independence, the French Revolutionary wars, ended in the crescendo of Napoleon's campaign and the finale of the peace after Waterloo. The conquests with which the British Empire emerged have in the long run resulted, after the long struggle, in an immense expansion of trade to the mother country, and to London. But in the meantime, commerce was subordinated to the necessities of war, and the pace of material prosperity in the Kingdom soon slackened after Walpole retired in 1741. Thus nineteen years after 1737 we find an increment of only 12 per cent. in the value of the imports of the Kingdom and of under 6 per cent. in the

value of the exports. The imports of London were actually slightly lower in 1756 than in 1737, though the exports had risen rather more than those at the outports.

The years immediately following 1756 show more favourably, especially for the imports of London. This is chiefly attributable to the accession of trade resulting from Clive's successful campaigns in India. A steady rise continued until we reach 1792. In that year, the imports of England reached £17,898,000 and the exports £23,674,000. London's share was £12,072,000 and £14,743,000 respectively, or nearly 65 per cent. of the whole.

One of the factors that had enabled London to maintain in 1792 almost the percentage of the total trade that it had in 1756 was the great development in the trade with the West Indies. From 1700 to 1715 the average annual importations of West India sugar into England had been 34,800 hogsheads. During the next fifteen years the average had risen to 60,450. Steady progress was shown until we come to the seventh decade of the century when the Islands were acquired, and then we find a long stride forward in the average of the ten years 1764 to 1773. This average was 122,300 hogsheads. In the years of war, hurricanes and the temporary loss of the islands that marked the following years we find a reduction in the imports, but by 1792 the position had been more than recovered, and the imports of 153,000 hogsheads of that year formed the high water mark. up to that time. It must be borne in mind that the arrivals of sugar were accompanied by large consignments of rum, dyewoods, ginger and pimento. Out of the 153,000 hogsheads of sugar coming to England in 1792 105,000 were landed in London, in addition to 27,500 puncheons of rum.

The pressure of this increased business upon the quay and warehouse accommodation in the port which had not been substantially extended since the reign of Elizabeth, became so acute and imposed such vexatious delays and losses upon traders that the West India merchants were prompted to agitate for a complete re-organization of the port. Of the far-reaching results of this agitation we shall proceed to speak in the next chapter.





A VIEW OF BLACKWALL, LOOKING TOWARDS GREENWICH

From an engraving by J. BOYDELL, 1750





## CHAPTER VII

# The Agitation for Reform

AS far back as 1705 the traders in the Port had complained of their treatment by the owners of the legal quays. In that year they published a reasoned statement in favour of the extension of these wharves, calling attention to the "difficulties, delays, loss of time and inconveniences," and to the exactions of the organized monopoly which had been created by the refusal to license more quays for the landing of goods. They pointed out that while Bristol, with a smaller business, possessed 4,000 lineal feet of quays, London had to be content with 1,400 feet. They gave details of the steps taken by the wharfingers to preserve their monopoly, instancing that the combination purchased the renewal of every lease whatever the cost, supporting the higher rent charges by higher rates on goods. They averred that London was losing trade to the outports, and contended that if the privileges of the legal quays were maintained, their rates should be controlled. The remonstrance had no result, and the merchants appealed to Parliament for relief. Parliament promised an inquiry, but in the language of the narrator, "nothing was concluded thereon, such proceedings, as is very probable, being then staid by some palliating measures of the wharfingers."

By the end of the eighteenth century the evils in the Port had been increasingly felt with the increasing trade. Some mitigation had been attempted by privileges accorded to certain wharves on the south side of the river, called Sufferance Wharves, because the grant to them for landing goods was liable to be taken away at short notice. But the additional facilities were so limited and their operations so guarded in the interest of the legal quays that little relief was realized, and indeed, the owners of the Sufferance Wharves themselves soon entered the monopolist ring and laid themselves open to the accusation of levying even higher charges than the legal quays.

The City Corporation who, as related above, had been the Port Authority since the Conquest, and were constantly

maintaining an inflexible attitude against any attacks on their rights, remained supine on the subject, although the abuses complained of almost threatened the existence of the Port. They eventually threw in their lot with the owners of the legal quays so organized opposition was decided upon. Their inaction may have been due to the fact that no statute charged them with any responsibilities for the encouragement of trade in the Port, or to the fact that any extension of the Port on the north side would have to be in suburban areas not subject to their control as regards the buildings erected.

It was chiefly due to the energy and persistence of one man, Mr. William Vaughan, that the great measures of relief to the Port, by the making of the modern dock system of London, was brought about. Vaughan was the second son of Samuel Vaughan, a London merchant, and Sarah Hallowell, a native of Boston, Massachusetts. He was educated at Warrington Academy, where his tutor was Dr. Priestley. Early in his career he was attracted by the subject of docks and canals, and studied naval architecture in the Greenland Dock. In 1783, at the age of thirty-one, he was elected a director of the Royal Exchange Assurance Corporation, and was later on appointed the Governor of the Corporation. He was a convinced Free Trader. These short biographical details will explain Mr. Vaughan's interest in the London Port question, which had so long agitated the commercial community. He began to write a series of tracts on this subject. The first one, "On Wet Docks, Quays, and Warehouses for the Port of London, with hints respecting Trade," appeared in 1793. The tract urged the construction of docks in the Port, suggesting St. Katharine's Church, Wapping, the Isle of Dogs, and Rotherhithe as convenient sites. It is a tribute to his prescience that within thirty years of the publication of this tract all these sites were occupied by docks. He followed writing by convening a meeting of the chairmen of public bodies and merchants at the Merchant Seamen's Office, on the 6th March, 1794, to take into consideration the state of the legal quays. The meeting adjourned to the 14th March, and then resolved to appoint a committee to consider the whole question and to make recommendations. They took a year all but a day to deliberate, and on the 13th March, 1795,



they came to the resolution "that Wet Docks at Wapping would best tend to remove the difficulties and inconveniences which affected the commerce of the Port, and that they were of opinion that the forming of a cut from Blackwall might be proposed and that a communication of the plan should be made to the Corporation of the City of London and also to Government, to request their support."

A general subscription having been agreed upon and books opened for the purpose, the subscribers met at the London Tavern on the 5th January, 1796, and agreed to prepare a petition to Parliament to bring in a Bill for the purpose of constructing the proposed accommodation. A special resolution thanking Vaughan for the assiduity and ability he had manifested, and the assistance he had given during the progress of the business, confirms the conclusion that his was the initiating and executive mind leading the movement.

The petition to Parliament brought matters to a head, and though the country was beginning the great twenty years' struggle with France, the Ministry recognized that the question was one of the greatest urgency, and they appointed a committee of the House of Commons, with Sir William Young, Bart., as the chairman, to inquire into the best mode of providing accommodation for the increased trade and shipping of the Port of London, with special reference to the Bill.

The Committee heard evidence for the first time on the 18th March, 1796, and when it finished its hearing on the 25th April it had sat for twenty-five days. Fifty-nine witnesses were called (every interest in the Port being heard) including representatives of the Trinity House, Customs, Admiralty, Fire Offices, Merchants, East India Company, Corporation of London, Wharfingers, City Porters and Carmen, Lightermen, and Shipowners. The Committee's report is dated the 13th May, 1796. When the mass of evidence and the delicate and complicated questions to be dealt with are taken into consideration, the industry of the achievement is almost without precedent, whilst the soundness and sagacity of the recommendations arrived at have been demonstrated by the events that have followed upon them.

The evidence given in the course of the inquiry was so

detailed and comprehensive that it is impossible to cite passages, but a summary of it will afford sufficient opportunity of our understanding the case for reform and the best defence of the vested interests involved.

The main case in favour of reform was based on the congestion resulting from the greatly increased traffic to be dealt with at quays, whose total accommodation had not been augmented for 100 years; on the consequent delays to ships and goods; the plundering of cargoes during the interval between their discharge in the river and landing at the quays and on the exactions of the wharfingers. Grave complaints were made also as to the river having been allowed to silt up.

To understand the position at this time it must be remembered that by far the great majority of vessels discharged and loaded at moorings in the stream. The remainder, which were the smallest class of vessels, lay alongside the quays. Goods discharging from the vessels in the stream were unloaded into lighters, and thence landed at the quays (which were for the most part without cover), and were there examined by the Customs. The next stage was to convey the goods by cart or trolley to the merchants or public warehouses situated in the streets adjoining the quays, and there the goods were marketed and distributed. Most of the homeward-bound ships lay between Limehouse and London Bridge. The larger ships of 350-400 tons were moored at Deptford. The still larger Indiamen were at Deptford and Blackwall. The coasting and short sea traders got as near London Bridge as possible. The Hamburg ships were opposite St. Katharine Church. Colliers usually lay between Ratcliff Cross and New Crane Stairs. Old Gravel Lane in that district received its name because it was the thoroughfare used by carts taking gravel to the colliers as ballast for the return journey to the Tyne.

The case, based upon the insufficiency of the moorings in the river to cope with the augmented traffic, was unanswerable. In 1705 the number of ships coming into the Port from foreign ports had been 1,335, with a tonnage of 157,000. In 1751 the number of ships was 1,682 and the tonnage 235,000. By 1794 the number of such ships entering had increased to 3,663 and the tonnage to 620,000. Coastwise shipping between 1750 and 1795 had increased







*A Perspective View of the River Thames &c. taken from the Kings Arms at BLACKWALL*

1 Shooters Hill. 2 Woodstock. 3 The East India Dock Yard.

*The Gallows are seen on the right*



in numbers from 6,396 to 11,964, and in tonnage from 512,000 to 1,176,000. Many of the trades were seasonal, leading to irregular arrivals and prolonged occupation of moorings, with the result that sometimes there were as many as 775 vessels stationed in the Upper Pool at moorings designed for a maximum of 545. Ships were constantly sitting on their anchors when the tide ebbed. The obstruction in the river was intensified by the barge traffic. The number of lighters, hoys, and craft moving in the circumscribed area of the Port (the section of the river where most of the trade was done was not more than two and a half miles in length) was 3,419. Of these, 2,196 were coal barges, half of which were used as warehouses, and therefore contributing to the general blocking of traffic. There was no system for mooring ships, each master going where he could find a vacant berth. The river was often so filled with shipping that a boat could not cross the river, and vessels had sometimes to wait a week before proceeding to the Pool. The difficulty of reaching the cargoes of ships so congested together often led to scarcity in London itself when there was plenty in the river. Thus in 1794 coals at one time reached the price of £6 6s. a chaldron simply because the colliers could not be discharged. In hard winters, large quantities of ice formed above London Bridge by the damming up of waters caused by the bridge, were brought down the stream and added to the dangers of navigation.

No attempt was made by the Corporation of London, or anyone else, to deny the existence of these evils, nor did they controvert the further charges as to the insufficiency of the legal quays. Evidence was given and accepted by the Committee to the effect that loaded lighters were frequently detained at these quays for want of room to discharge their cargoes; that there was at times a deficiency of lighters for service in the river because of the delay in unloading them; and that craft were frequently detained by others remaining alongside the quays as warehouses for goods, or aground for want of a proper depth of water and waiting the turn of the tide. Goods after being weighed for duty had to remain on the quays because the narrow streets in the district were blocked by carts. The warehouses connected with the quays were inadequate for sugar, then

representing the largest tonnage of goods imported. There was only warehouse accommodation for 32,000 hogsheads to meet an annual importation of between 100,000 and 120,000 hogsheads, all arriving within three months of the year. War time then necessitated convoys, and sometimes the fleets of West Indiamen would bring 35,000 to 40,000 hogsheads at a time. Sugars were often piled six or eight hogsheads high on the quay. Another cause of congestion was that the quays, instead of being used for transit purposes only, were converted into markets for spirits, oil, fruit, and other articles. Again the export and import trades were carried on together at the same quays. Ships from foreign ports, particularly West Indian vessels, were delayed in discharge from neglect of the prime entries after reporting. An instance was given of a dispute on post entries when 1,500 hogsheads of sugar were allowed to block the legal quays for a month. Liquors were gauged at one wharf and then landed again at another. The Revenue Officers were accused of being insufficient in numbers and with taking too many holidays, and yet the staff was so badly managed that whilst one set of officers might be scarcely engaged, others had such a press of business that they could not accomplish it with accuracy and dispatch. Another complaint was the increased risks of fire, due to all the quays and warehouses being so close together and crowded with goods in spite of the legislation following the Great Fire of 1666. It was computed that in ten years £500,000 of property had been lost by fire.

It cannot be surprising that, with all the confusion and laxity shown in the administration of the Port there were loud and persistent complaints of the plunder of goods in the Port which brought loss not only to merchants, but to the public revenue. One cause to which the mal-practices were attributed was that vessels were allowed to commence to unload when only a portion of the cargo was entered. Other causes were the allowance of thirty days' grace from the time of ship's report for rum to be landed ; the permission to draw samples of rum before landing ; the facility for taking 12 lb. of sugar from each hogshead under the pretence of sample when the actual samples exhibited for sale weighed only a few ounces ; and the inattention of masters and mates in quitting their vessels before the



completion of their discharge, leaving the cargoes to the mercy of the labourers. Such labourers—then called lumpers—were stated to wear loose clothing to facilitate the secretion of stolen goods. Plundering and smuggling were carried on with the connivance of the revenue officers, who came on board prepared with instruments and bladders to draw off their share of the plunder, giving as their excuse that their pay was inadequate and that they could not subsist without what they termed their perquisites. Gangs of thieves went about the river at night, favoured in their nefarious occupations by the darkness and the lack of protection to goods. So many and various were these gangs that they were classified. There were "River Pirates," who were armed thieves, cutting lighters adrift at night and following them till they drifted on shore, when they disposed of the proceeds; "Night Plunderers," who were watermen of the lowest character; "Scuffle Hunters," who prowled about the quays; "Light Horsemen," the mates of ships and revenue officers; "Heavy Horsemen," porters and labourers, and "Mud Larks," working in concert with labourers, who threw goods overboard at high water from vessels lying near the river bank, the goods being picked up from the mud after the tide had ebbed. "Mud Larks" were stated often to earn £5 a night. Several estimates were made as to the amount of the losses, but no satisfactory data existed for making the calculation. The estimates placed the aggregate losses from plunder to merchants and the public revenue at from £250,000 to £800,000 per annum.

A great and general complaint was made of inattention to the proper conservation of the depth of the river. Ballast was continually shedded into the river by ships in the act of loading it. Through the tiers of ships laying athwart the river in too great numbers, the inside ships grounded at low water, gathering the silt and forming shoals. The sewers of the metropolis were allowed after hard showers to discharge into the Thames thousands of tons of soil, and the offal and cleansing of the dry docks regularly contributed to the choking of the running stream. It was further pointed out that mudbanks collected in the river as frequently as shoals of sand or gravel, and that whilst the ballast lighters with a view to profit resorted to the sand and gravel shoals they left the mud-banks alone, thus neglecting to deepen

the river equally or at the points where deepening was most essential. Competent witnesses convinced the Committee of the truth of their statement that in their time the river had lost from four to five feet in the depth of water at many of the stations.

After reviewing the complaints, the Committee came to the following general conclusions upon them :—

“Your Committee, recurring from incidental grievances to the natural, fundamental and actual resources of the Port of London, observe them to be incompetent to the great purpose of its extended commerce and proceed to inquire into the best mode for providing sufficient accommodation for its increased trade and shipping.”

The report then discussed the merits of eight schemes for improved accommodation, noting that only one of them proceeded on the assumption that the Thames might be so deepened and improved to answer all the purposes of trade and navigation. The rest of the schemes were founded on the one general principle of the necessity of recesses or docks being made as receptacles for shipping out of and clear from the channel of the river. The eight schemes were as follows :—

(1) Mr. Ogle's plan for deepening the river, and improving and extending the legal quays. Mr. Ogle combined the occupations of wharfinger, shipbroker, and shipshusband. His proposals included the enlargement of the existing legal quays, the rebuilding of the adjacent warehouse, the widening of the streets approaching the quays, the purchase of the mooring chains from London Bridge to the King's Moorings at Deptford with a new system of mooring ships, the deepening of the river down to Deptford, the establishment of a day and night service of customs boats to prevent smuggling, and the appointment of six harbour masters to supervise the traffic in the ports. The capital cost involved in this scheme was estimated at £565,000.

(2) The merchants' plan for docks at Wapping connected by canal with the river at Blackwall. This was the scheme originally put forward by Mr. Vaughan and the subject of the Bill which had led to the appointment of the Committee. The estimate of the cost was £993,000. The chief points made in its favour were the proximity of the docks to the







GALLEY QUAY, LOWER THAMES STREET



city and the saving effected by the canal of the crowded navigation of the river above Blackwall. The docks of thirty-nine acres were projected to hold 350 ships at one time, with two entrances into the river, besides one from the canal, and a depth of water of twenty-four feet at spring tides, allowing vessels drawing from eighteen to nineteen feet to dock on any day at high water. The canal was to receive vessels of 400 tons burthen. Provision was made for warehouses.

(3) The City of London's plan for docks and canals and for improving and extending the legal quays. This scheme provided for one dock of 102 acres across the Isle of Dogs capable of containing more than 400 ships, with river entrances at each end of the docks to be available for vessels of all descriptions, and for another dock at Rotherhithe of equal dimensions, with a canal communicating with the Vauxhall Canal to be specially appropriated to colliers. The city plan proposed to bring out the frontage of the legal quays further into the river, making five indented quays, the greatest projection into the river being 150 feet, and with the absorption of Billingsgate to increase the total length of the quays from 1,550 to 4,150 feet, and increasing the width of quay space from 50 to 60 feet. Objection was taken to the encroachment on the navigable channel of the river and also to the distance of the proposed docks from London as rendering lighterage difficult, whilst endangering property and the public revenue. The cost of the scheme was put at £1,109,000.

(4) Mr. Wyatt's plan for docks. Mr. Wyatt was an architect. He proposed three docks in the Isle of Dogs parallel with each other, with a basin at each end common to all of them. The Northern Dock was designed to accommodate 200 light-ships, the Centre dock 250 ships from foreign ports, and the Southern dock appropriated to 250 colliers. The Blackwall Basin was to take an additional 160 ships and the Limehouse Basin 800 lighters. The scheme, which was estimated to cost £840,000, made no provision for wharves or warehouses, but a novel feature was that ships could discharge on to a floating wharf to be stationed between the ship and lighter, so that each article could be weighed or gauged and the amount of Customs duties payable immediately ascertained. This part of the

scheme, though admittedly protecting the revenue, afforded no protection to the merchant, and was, moreover, held to create delays through the double handling involved.

(5) The Southwark plan, submitted by Mr. Cracklow, a surveyor, "by order of the Committee deputed by the inhabitants of Southwark." This scheme was for five square docks of twenty acres each at Rotherhithe communicating with each other and the Thames, and also having an outlet by a canal opening into the Thames opposite St. Paul's Cathedral. The trades catered for were those of colliers, timber vessels, and vessels for sale clearing for the foreign trade. The only arguments adduced in favour of the site were that the level of the land was from five to eight feet below high water, that the land was cheap and there was no building on it, and that as a consequence the estimate of £300,000 was by far the lowest of any of the schemes submitted. None of the interests connected with trade supported the scheme.

(6) The plan of Mr. Spence, Maritime Surveyor to the Admiralty, proposed an arrangement and division of trades and shipping into twelve classes, each class to have a separate dock proportionate to the frequency and number of arrivals. Six of the docks were to be 600 feet square and to be situated on the north side of the river between the Tower and Limehouse. The other six were to be 400 feet square on the opposite shore. As an alternative, Mr. Spence suggested that all twelve docks should be placed on the shore of the Isle of Dogs, opposite Deptford and Greenwich. No witnesses, except Mr. Spence himself, appeared in favour of his scheme. The brethren of the Trinity House, to whom it was referred, declared its immediate practicability and praised its ingenuity, but stated a preference for one capacious dock as less expensive and more generally convenient. Its cost was estimated at £510,000.

(7) Mr. Walker's plan for docks was to cost £880,000. Mr. Walker was a captain in the West India trade. He proposed docks at Wapping nearly on the site of those intended by the merchants, with an area of fifty-five acres of water and spacious wharves, but without warehouses. Two entrances from the dock were proposed, with a third into a canal similar to that suggested by the merchants, but occupying ground nearer the river. Another dock for timber



ships was designed to be made across the Isle of Dogs. This scheme met with the unqualified approbation of the Trinity House Brethren.

(8) The most ambitious plans were submitted by Mr. Reveley, an architect and engineer. His main idea was to straighten the channels of the Thames, using the areas of channel thus saved as docks. His first plan proposed a new channel straight from Limehouse to Blackwall, leaving the long reach round the Isle of Dogs as a dock with flood-gates at each entrance to the new course of the river. The second plan was to conduct the new channel inclining towards Woolwich Reach below Blackwall so as to convert the upper bend of the river by Perry's Dock into a second dock. The third and most extensive plan was to conduct the new channel of the Thames straight from Wapping to Woolwich, intersecting the river so as to convert the three bends between Wapping and Woolwich into three docks. The Committee declared the plans to be novel, grand and captivating, but, for reasons urged by the Trinity House, declined to consider them as practicable.

The report of the Committee made no definite recommendation in regard to any of the schemes. It sets out impartially the reasons for and against each of them, and left the final decision to Parliament, but it is clear from its remarks that the principle of constructing docks was generally accepted.

The last section of the report is devoted to stating the cases of the parties who had petitioned to Parliament against any alteration of system as subversive of their interests. The Shadwell Water Works claimed that the merchants' plan would ruin their undertaking by the destruction of 1,800 houses and the cutting through of their mains and service pipes. The Tackle House and City Porters stated that the City of London had immemorially had the government and regulation of persons concerned in the unlading and delivery of merchandise imported into London, and that such porters would be much injured by the export and import business being removed out of the limits of the city. The Carmen contended that any docks outside the city limits would be most injurious to those holding licenses which had ever been transferable as a secure property. The Town Clerk of the City protested

that to imbank or enclose the bed of the river or make any cuts into it without previous license under the City Seal would be an infringement of the city's ancient charters and rights. The Watermen's Company represented that there were 12,000 men on their books, of whom 4,000 were actually serving on board men-of-war, and that should docks be made, not one-half of those now employed on the Thames would have subsistence. The Lightermen stated that £120,000 was vested in craft and tackle employed in the foreign trade, and that much of the lighterage business would be lost in the event of the construction of docks where shipping could deliver by cranes direct on to the quay. The Proprietors of the Legal Quays stated that by the establishment of docks they would lose two-thirds in value of their property, supposing that only the West India trade were diverted there, and that with the whole foreign trade withdrawn their property would be annihilated. The Sufferance Wharves contented themselves by saying that they would be much reduced in value, and that as a consequence poor rates would be heavier and many inhabitants driven to seek parochial assistance.

Encouraged by the attitude of the Committee, the West India Merchants in the session of 1797, again brought in their Bill for a dock at Wapping, and a canal to Blackwall. The Bill was read a second time on the 15th February. At the committee stage the case for making docks already heard at the inquiry held in the previous year was again presented, and opposed by the same interests. The Committee reported to the House of Commons in favour of the Bill in July, but being opposed in the House, no time could be found for the Bill to be further dealt with in the short time available before the end of the session. The House, however, by resolutions of the 14th July, decided that the Parliamentary notices given in respect of the Bill and the deposit of plans as well as the consents given to the Bill should be accepted as sufficient for the purpose of a similar Bill if introduced in the ensuing session.

While the Merchants' scheme was being thus proceeded with, the City Corporation, convinced that radical improvements in the port could not be delayed, promoted a Bill for a canal of their own between Blackwall and Wapping and for the other reforms of administration they had



submitted to the 1796 Committee. The Bill was referred to a special committee consisting of the City members, members of the maritime counties, and merchants. The volume of the opposition to this scheme was great and the proceedings so protracted that this Bill also had to be hung up till the following session.

Meanwhile, the bulk of the West India Merchants had become converts to the Isle of Dogs' scheme for docks, chiefly on the ground of its more economical construction as compared with the Wapping Dock, which entailed the destruction of 2,000 houses and other valuable property, and the making of a canal which was not necessary to the Isle of Dogs' scheme. The session of 1798 was spent in further interminable discussions on the three schemes, in which the evidence given was only a repetition of that given in the 1796 Committee. Enormous sums were spent by the promoters in the proceedings before Parliament which were again so prolonged that no decision could be given by the House.

One practical step taken during this barren conflict of interests deserves to be recorded, viz., the appointment of a police force by the West India Committee, to cope with the question of the plundering of cargoes. Mr. Patrick Colquhoun, the magistrate of Queen Square Police Court, was the author of the scheme, which provided for a police department at Wapping, where magistrates should preside for the purpose of taking cognisance of offences committed on the river and its vicinity, a superintending magistrate, a resident justice, a clerk, a chief constable, and armed constables being the staff appointed. The constables, besides patrolling, acted as watchmen on board each ship under discharge, to search all labourers when returning on shore in the evening, and to bring to justice all persons conveying any article clandestinely out of the ship. A general register of labourers discharging West India ships was formed, the men being employed in rotation, victualled on board, and compelled to work in a uniform in which goods could not be concealed. Under this scheme 200 constables and 900 labourers were registered. Mr. Harriott, an Essex magistrate, who was appointed first magistrate, described it as a labour not unworthy of Hercules. On one occasion an attack was made on the Police Office, shortly after its

establishment, by a mob of coal-heavers and ship and wharf labourers, and the magistrates had to disperse it by resorting to firearms. It was claimed that by the joint efforts of all concerned some thousands of men who had long considered plunder as a privilege were brought into reasonable order.

The session of 1799 saw the end of the long struggle by a compromise made by the various conflicting interests. A scheme based upon the Merchants' scheme for docks at Wapping and another scheme for docks at the Isle of Dogs, agreed upon between the Corporation and the West India merchants, were submitted to Parliament. The Wapping plan came before a committee of the House in February, 1799. The Corporation were content to register their declaration of the rights of conservancy. The owners of the legal quays, who had been the chief opposers of reform, were promised compensation and did not appear. That part of the scheme referring to the canal between Wapping and Blackwall was withdrawn, and the opposition was so attenuated that the Bill passed through committee and was duly reported to the House. In May the City and the West India Merchants submitted a Bill to the same Parliamentary Committee for making two parallel docks across the Isle of Dogs from Limehouse to Blackwall, and a ship canal to the south of the docks to save vessels sailing to and from the Pool, the long passage round the Isle of Dogs. The Bill, like that of the Merchants, had a relatively easy course through the Committee, and having been reported on favourably by the Committee, passed quickly through the various stages and received the Royal Assent on the 12th July, 1799.

The Wapping scheme, though the first through Committee, did not become law that session, but the promoters were afforded facilities for re-introducing the Bill in the next session, and it passed into law on the 23rd May, 1800. Want of time to deal with the two Bills in the House at the late stage of the session is given as the reason why both could not be finished. The precedence given to the Isle of Dogs' scheme is probably attributable to the City interest in it, and also to the fact that the West India trade was then the chief trade in the Port and had suffered more grievously than any other by the scandalous conditions under which it was carried on. The official reason given by



the Committee was that though they had no hesitation in commending both schemes, it was so important that something should be done without further delay that they unanimously resolved to recommend the immediate adoption of the Isle of Dogs plan, because of the great advantage it offered to large ships in saving the dangers and delay of the circuitous passage round the island, and because the plan could be more expeditiously and cheaply executed than the Wapping plan.

The most important pronouncement in the report of the 1799 Committee whose labours resulted in the passing of the two Dock Bills, is its unqualified acceptance of the Docks system as the best method of improving the Port of London. They say "The establishment of Docks appears to the Committee to have so many advantages which a tide river cannot under any circumstances afford independent of them, from the security they give to shipping at every season of the year, and from the convenience of loading and unloading cargoes in them, that your Committee would consider any plan for the improvement of the Port imperfect of which Wet Docks did not make a part."

## CHAPTER VIII

# The West India Dock Company

THE Act of Parliament for the making of the West India Dock was the first legislation of its kind. In the case of Liverpool where the powers had been given by Parliament to make docks, the authority had been conferred on the municipality. In the case of the West India Docks, though the City Corporation were entrusted with the making and control of the canal on the south side of the docks, the much more important dock enterprise was vested in a private company, in whose operations the city, as will be seen, only bore a nominal part. It would have simplified many problems which arose in the course of the next hundred years had the corporation's long career as conservators of the river matured into the ownership and management of the dock systems. The decision to let private companies develop the resources of the port cannot be disassociated from the long opposition of the city to port reform or from its adoption of a half-hearted policy towards correcting the abuses when they perceived that reform could not longer be obstructed.

The West India Dock Act, 1799, formed the basis of legislation for the London dock at Wapping sanctioned in 1800, and the East India Dock sanctioned in 1802. Its provisions have so important a bearing on the subsequent history of the port that it appears desirable to furnish a summary of the Act.

The Act begins by reciting that owing to the progressive size of ships, the dangerous navigation in the river, the lack of room there and the resultant damage and losses, it would be beneficial to make a canal across the Isle of Dogs and it authorizes the Lord Mayor and the Common Council of the city to make the canal with the requisite works, embankments, bridges, etc. The management is also vested in the city. Authority is given to the city to buy all lands required both for the canal and the docks, but no owner of land could be forced to sell a portion of his property, and if a price could not be agreed, a jury could be empanelled





NEW DOCKS AND WAREHOUSES  
ON THE EVE OF COMPLETION, 1802, ON THE ISLE OF DOGS, NEAR LIMEHOUSE.  
*By William Daniell.*





to fix the price. All the lands, including the dock lands, were to be conveyed to the corporation and vested in them. Lord Gwydyr's lease of mooring chains between London Bridge and Bugsby's Hole were to be surrendered to the King subject to compensation being paid to Lord Gwydyr. All dues for the use of such moorings were thereupon to cease and the moorings were to be for the free use of the public.

In the recital describing the necessity for wet docks, it is stated that the ships in the West India trade frequently arrived at the Port of London in large fleets and occasioned great crowding, confusion and damage, that their cargoes being carried in lighters to the legal quay caused upon those quays and in the passage thither great obstructions, inconvenience and delay, and were exposed to pilferage and fraud, and that if good and sufficient wet docks were made in the Isle of Dogs with legal quays and warehouses, great additional room and much accommodation would be thereby given to the rest of the shipping using the port, and West India produce might be effectually secured from loss by theft, and the public revenue greatly benefited. It is mentioned that certain persons have subscribed the sum of £500,000, and the names of 123 subscribers are given. They include merchants then trading to the West Indies, many of whose names have survived in firms still trading in those regions. Amongst the list are Neill Malcolm, George Hibbert, John Wedderburn, William Lushington, Robert Milligan, Henry Davidson, William Anderson, John Latham, Thomas Mills, John Peat, and Joseph Hankey. The subscribers were to form the West India Dock Company. The sum subscribed was to be considered as capital or joint stock, to be personal estate, and transmitted as such. The liability of stockholders was limited to the amount of their holding. Dividends of 5 per cent. during construction could be paid, and the maximum dividend was limited to 10 per cent.

Within one month of the passing of the Act a meeting was to be held in the city for the election of the directors, the notice for such meeting to be given in the *London Gazette* and two morning papers, and also to be affixed at the Royal Exchange and the Guildhall. The board (or court, as it was called) of directors were to consist of thirteen stockholders, four aldermen of the city, and four members of

the city Common Council. The eight representatives of the city were not chosen by the city itself, but by the stockholders. The chairman and deputy-chairman were to be appointed by the board. One provision to be noted in respect of the board was that which compelled the temporary retirement of directors for one year in five, it being enacted that five directors should go out of office every year and not remain in office more than four succeeding years. The quorum of the board was fixed at five. Two general meetings were to be held each year, one during the first week in January, and the other during the first week in July. Nine proprietors could require a special meeting to be called at any time. Proprietors holding less than £500 of stock had no vote. Between £500 and less than £2,000, one vote. Between £2,000 and £5,000, two votes. Between £5,000 and £10,000, three votes, and over £10,000, four votes, which formed the maximum. Questions dealt with at proprietors' meetings were to be decided on by voting of members present at the meeting, with power to ask for a ballot. No voting by proxy was allowed, and it was not till nearly a century afterwards that proxy voting was legalized. The Corporation of London were allowed one vote for every thousand pounds of stock they contributed to the original issue of £500,000 through persons nominated by them for this purpose, but the records are not available to show whether this power was ever exercised. Proprietors had to be holders of stock for twelve months before being qualified to vote, and the chairman had the power to require every person desiring to vote to take an oath in the form prescribed by the Act that they were the owners of stock.

Five years were given to the company in which to complete the docks and the directors were authorized to build such and so many quays, wharves and warehouses as they should think necessary, convenient and sufficient for the trade and business and for the "landing and discharging lading and shipping of any goods, wares or merchandize that shall or may at any time or times be legally landed or shipped at the said quays or wharfs." The company was required to surround the premises by a brick or stone wall not less than 30 ft. in height, and outside the wall to dig a ditch 12 ft. wide and 6 ft. deep. No house or building was on any account or pretence to be erected within 100 yards



of the outside of the wall. Piers in the river, locks, sluices, bridges and all the other works necessary to the construction of the docks were authorized, and the important right to draw upon water from the Thames to fill the docks was conferred upon the company.

A restriction was put upon the company forbidding the building of slips, dry docks, graving docks, ways or any other place for the building or repairing of ships, and the company were prohibited from being in any way concerned in the business of building or repairing of ships. This restriction was for the protection of the dry dock owners in the port who had been amongst the most hostile of the opponents of the scheme for wet docks. The restriction was not removed till seventy-five years afterwards. Parliament would have done better to have compensated the dry dock owners for any possible loss of business as they did in the case of the legal quays. As it was, the restriction was inconvenient to shipowners and injurious to the interest of the port. Ships were compelled to go out into the river between their discharge and loading, incurring expense and risk, whilst the absence of the dock company's competition led to a monopoly amongst the few private graving docks, which tended to the maintenance of the old standard of inefficiency in this branch of the port's operations.

The Corporation were required to convey to six trustees for the company the lands which they had bought for the docks. The Lord Mayor, as conservator of the Thames, was empowered to appoint a harbour master for the port and the canal. An area of 200 yards radius from the dock entrances was excluded from the jurisdiction of the city, and made subject to the control of the dockmasters appointed by the directors of the company. Harbour masters and dockmasters had to satisfy the Trinity House Brethren that they were competent to fill their office.

The canal and docks were to have the same rights and privileges appertaining to the existing port, and were to be held to be parts of the Port of London, and merchandize was subject to the same regulations as to tolls, duties and customs, as if they had been dealt with at the existing legal quays. A declaration was accordingly made that the quays and wharves as should be enclosed with walls as already described, should be deemed to be legal quays.

From the proprietors' point of view the most important provision of the Act was contained in Section 87, which provided that during the term of twenty-one years from the completion of the docks all vessels arriving from any port in the West Indies with cargoes of West Indian produce should unload and land the whole of their cargoes within the West India Dock system. The penalty for any infraction of this requirement was the forfeiture of the vessel and a fine of £100 for each offence. Tobacco was exceptionally treated in that it was not allowed to be landed in the West India Docks but had to be carted to a King's tobacco warehouse on the river. Ships arriving from other parts but with West India produce on board were required to discharge such produce in the docks if so ordered by the Commissioners of Customs. Outward bound vessels for the West Indies were required to load in the West India Docks or below the canal entrance at Blackwall.

The monopoly so created afforded the requisite guarantee that the proprietors of the company would receive a satisfactory return on their capital, but at the same time it entailed the loss to the owners of the legal quays and sufferance wharves of the largest single trade in the port, with consequential injury to many other interests associated with them. Parliament recognized the justice of the claim for compensation, and by the Act, commissioners were appointed to adjudicate on such claims. Besides the legal quays and sufferance wharves there were claims from up-town warehouses where West India produce was stored, from Christ's Hospital for car-rooms, and from the tackle-house porters, ticket porters and free carmen of the city. Lord Gwydyr also made a claim for his interest in the mooring chains, and the Crown claimed for their interest in the chains. No claimant was allowed to present his claim till three years after the completion of the docks. The commissioners appointed by the Act were Lord Sheffield, Sir John William Anderson, Bart., William Curtis, Harvey Christian Combe, Brook Watson, Sir John Cramer (the last five being aldermen of the City of London), and thirty-four other persons, including several interested in the West India Dock Company and the Wapping Dock scheme. It is presumed the dock interest did not serve when the claims of their defeated rivals were considered. The commissioners



were directed to give "just and liberal compensation or satisfaction by purchase or by employment," and there was an appeal to a jury in case the commissioners could not agree with the parties who sought compensation. The money required for this purpose was to be paid out of the Consolidated Fund, but as a contribution towards such payments fresh dues were imposed for fourteen years on all vessels using the port. The rates were divided into five classes :—

- 1st. 1d. per ton on vessels trading coastwise.
- 2nd. 1½d. per ton on vessels trading to Ireland, English Channel, and North Sea ports.
- 3rd. 2d. per ton on vessels trading to Russia and the Baltic ports.
- 4th. 2½d. per ton on vessels trading with ports in France (south of Ushant), Portugal, the Spanish Atlantic coast and North America.
- 5th. 3½d. per ton on vessels trading with the Mediterranean, Greenland, West Indies, Mexico, Africa, East Indies, China and all Pacific ports.

The rates were charged both for the inward and outward voyage, so that in the case of the foreign trade, vessels regularly employed in the East or West India service had to pay 7d. per ton for each voyage merely for entering and leaving the port, but Parliament considered this a fair tax in view of the great advantages conferred on shipping.

Exemptions were granted to men-of-war and for coastwise vessels under forty-five tons, to all corn and vessels coastwise, fishing vessels, and to vessels navigating the river above Gravesend.

For the use of the canal the corporation were authorized to charge after it had been opened for three years, 2d. per ton on sailing vessels of over 200 tons, 1½d. per ton on vessels between 100 to 200 tons, 10s. for vessels between 50 and 100 tons, 5s. for vessels between 20 and 50 tons. Lighters and boats rowed through the canal were to pay 1s. each.

The dock charges authorized were on a much more liberal scale. A rate of 6s. 8d. a ton on vessels was fixed, which included the use of the docks for six months after the vessel was discharged, the discharge of the vessel, the cooperage and hoops and nails which such cargo might require during its discharge, and also the right to load outward cargo.

On cargo landed in the docks (and this by the monopoly granted to the company meant practically all cargoes) a schedule of rates varying with the nature of the goods was authorized, to include wharfage, landing, housing, weighing, cooperage, twelve weeks free storage and delivery. Sugar, the principal article concerned, was subject to a rate of 8d. per cwt. On rum, the rate was 1d. per gallon. Ginger paid 3s. 3d. per cwt. Cocoa 1s. 6d. per cwt., and Coffee the same rate. On spices the rates varied between 3s. 2d. and 4s. 8d. per cwt. For goods brought loose, except wood, the rate was 1s. per cwt. All other articles not mentioned, were to be liable to pay the rates heretofore usually paid in the port.

The short provision in Section 138 of the Act which in effect has been introduced into all succeeding Dock Acts, had eventually such far-reaching effects on the fortunes of the Dock Companies that it is desirable to set it out in full :—

“Provided always and be it enacted that this Act shall not extend to charge with the said rate or duty of six shillings and eightpence per ton hereinbefore granted any lighters or craft entering into the said docks or basins or cuts to convey, deliver, discharge or receive ballast or goods to, or from on board of, any ship or ships, vessel or vessels.”

The immediate intention of the section was to put lighters into exactly the same position as they had been in the river, and to make the dock waters as free to them in their occupation as the river waters had been, hence the name of “free water clause” given to this legislation. Whilst the monopoly extended to the docks lasted, this privilege was merely a nominal one, but as will be seen hereafter the subsequent withdrawal of the monopoly and the maintenance of the exemption were at the root of the financial troubles which eventually overtook the dock companies.

To furnish the corporation with funds for the canal and compensation payable by them on other accounts, the Act stipulated that the sum of £72,000 should be advanced out of the consolidated fund. No provision for repayment was made, any excess of income from the canal being devoted to the reduction of rates for its use. As regards the income from the new port rates on vessels, the corporation were appointed as collectors and were to pay out of that income all expenses connected with maintaining the mooring



chains and the harbourmaster's staff, handing the balance to the Treasury towards the liquidation of sums advanced under the Act, with 5 per cent. interest per annum added thereto.

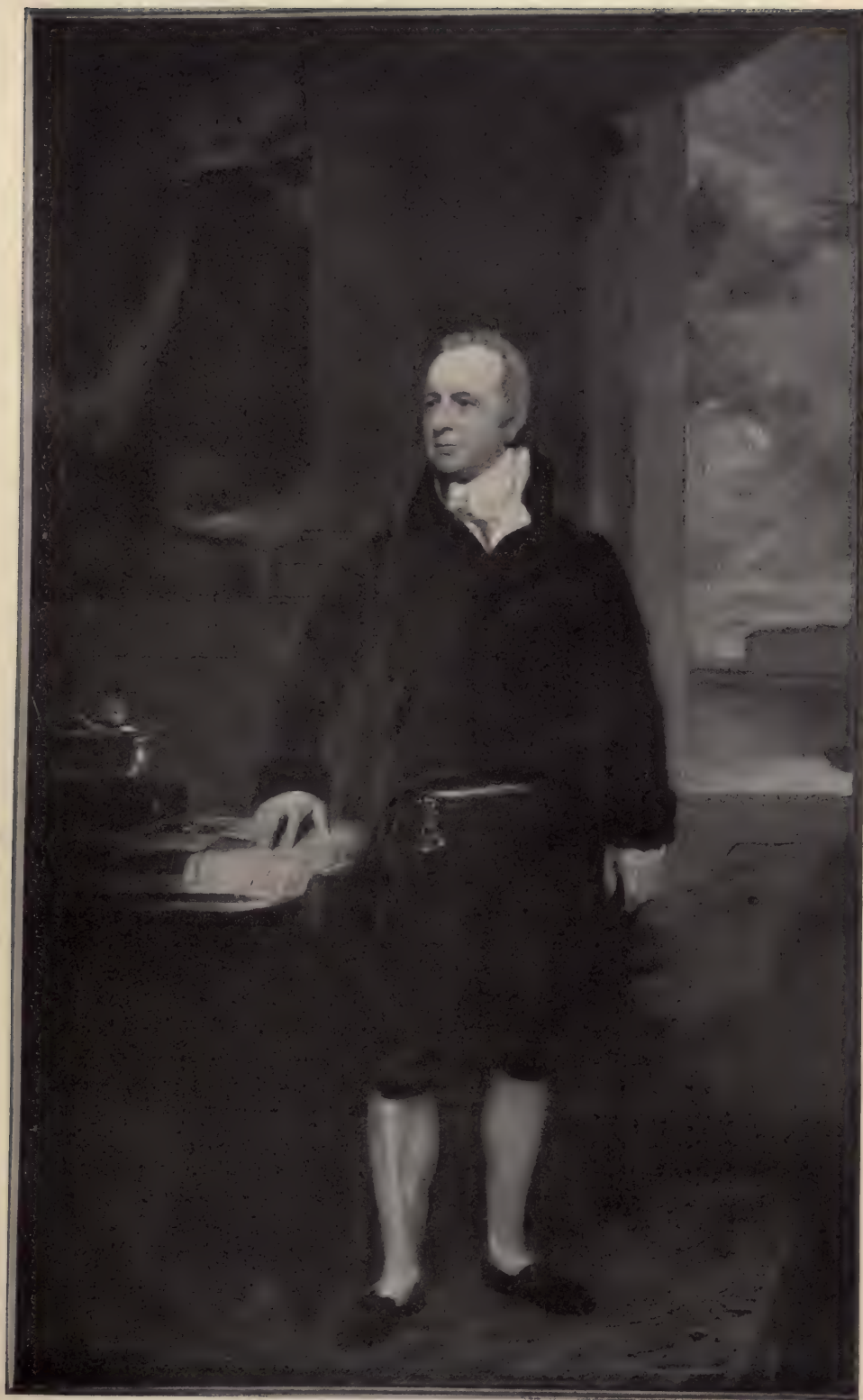
The financing of the company proceeded on different lines. No Government money was available for them. Capital stock of £500,000 was authorized with the power of borrowing £100,000 on mortgage if required. The company were required to pay half the costs incurred in obtaining the Act. After paying the dividends authorized, they were entitled to use any surplus funds in repaying borrowed money, "and in or towards executing such of the other purposes of the Act as are to be executed by the said directors or by and at the charges of the West India Dock Company, and when by the means last mentioned or otherwise, the principal monies so to be borrowed by the said company shall be all repaid as aforesaid, then and in such case the rates and duties by this Act granted to the said company shall be lowered in the manner hereinbefore directed as far as the same can, under the then existing circumstances be done with prudence and safety." In order that the operations of the company should be conducted with some public oversight, it was prescribed that a statement of the receipt and application of all monies should be annually laid before Parliament by the directors. We shall see later that on the expiry of the monopolies an acute controversy arose as to the application of the income of the company, and it is convenient therefore to have repeated the wording of the Section, which the critics of the directors contended had not been respected.

The question of the management of the business in the docks offered novel problems. No other port system in the country afforded a suitable precedent, for whilst the main object of the few existing docks was to serve solely as a landing or shipping off place for goods, the West India Dock undertaking was equally intended for the safe warehousing of valuable goods on a large scale. The losses from plunder and smuggling, the damage from the rough handling of goods which required careful treatment, the general demoralization of the clerks and labourers engaged in the work, and the dread of fire which ever since the Great Fire of 1666 had always haunted merchants,—

these were all matters which the promoters of the dock system were out to remedy. The making of the West India Docks and warehouses provided a fenced town unassailable from the outside, but it remained to be seen that there was security for the merchant and shipowner within the walls. It was with this end in view that a large portion of the Act relates to the regulation of the business. Vessels were not to navigate the docks under sail. Entrances were not to be obstructed. Nuisances were prohibited. Vessels were to unload immediately on entrance into the docks. Explosives were not allowed in the docks, and combustible materials were only allowed twelve hours on the quays. No fires or lights were allowed on the dock premises except lamps by the sides of ways outside the dock walls. Persons guilty of arson were to be deemed felons without benefit of clergy, and anyone who damaged the works were liable to fine, imprisonment or transportation. Penalties incurred by seamen or lightermen were recoverable from the masters or owners. Undue preference by officials was prohibited. Besides laying down specific regulations, the Act empowered the corporation to make such by-laws and regulations for the canal as they considered expedient, and to enforce penalties for breaches of the same. A similar supplementary power was given to the dock directors, but in their case the proprietors had to signify their approval. Both in the case of the corporation and the company the by-laws and regulations had further to be sanctioned by the Lord Chancellor and another judge. Penalties recovered from offenders were to be divided as follows:—Any penalty exceeding £20 was to be applied to the use of the company itself. Smaller penalties were disposed of as to one-half to the relief of the seamen, lightermen, watermen or other persons maimed or disabled by accident in the dock premises or the widows or families of such of them as might be killed, and as to the other half, to the disabled or worn out servants of the company or their families. The severity of the specific by-laws and regulations has been modified from time to time since the Act was passed, but their general tenour has been preserved in all the Dock Acts passed, and is observed in the administration of the port authority to-day.

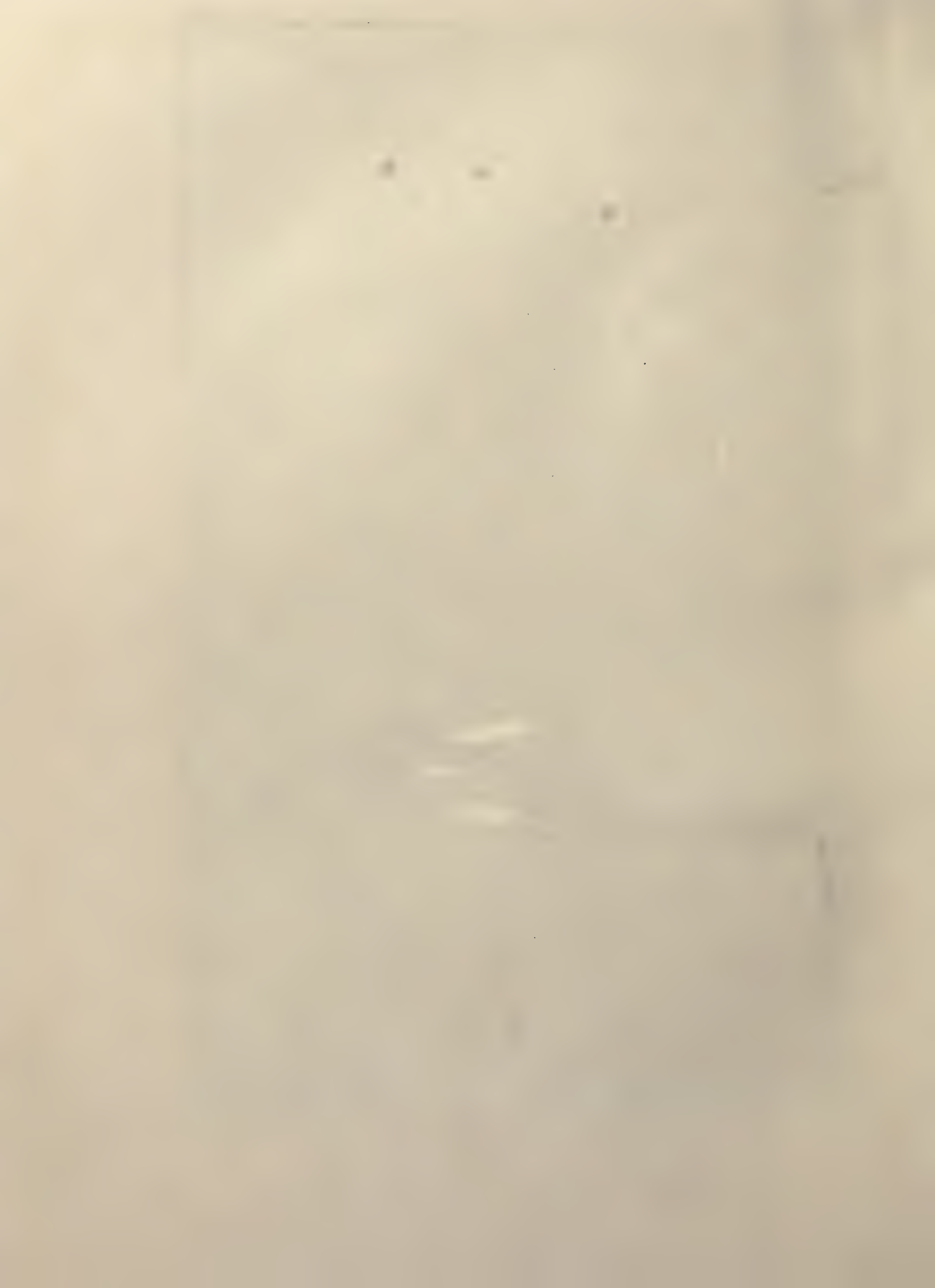
In closing this review of the Act relating to the first





ALDERMAN GEORGE HIBBERT

*From a painting by Sir Thomas Lawrence in possession of the Port  
of London Authority*





commercial dock on the Thames, it may be observed that the constitution of the West India Dock Company laid down by the Act was to a great extent modelled upon the constitution of the East India Company.

The first statutory meeting of the company took place at the London Tavern on the 8th August, 1799, and was held for the purpose of appointing the twenty-one directors authorized by the Act. The chair was taken by Alderman Sir John William Anderson, Bart. So much of the Act of Parliament as related to the choice and appointment of directors having been read, it was resolved to make the appointment by ballot. The city remembrancer attended, and presented to the meeting by order of the Port Committee of the Corporation a paper containing resolutions of that committee for recommending four aldermen and four common councilmen therein named to be chosen and appointed directors. Though the meeting was bound by the Act to elect representatives of the city on to the board, the stockholders resented the nomination of individuals, and upon objection being taken, the resolutions were withdrawn by Mr. Figgins, one of the members of the City Port Committee, with the consent of his colleagues. The ballot was then proceeded with, and at its conclusion the scrutineers declared that the election had fallen on the following gentlemen as having a legal majority of votes :—

## ALDERMEN.

Sir John William Anderson, Bart.	..	..	256
Mr. Alderman Curtis	..	..	243
Mr. Alderman Hibbert..	..	..	271
Mr. Alderman Champion	..	..	240

## COMMON COUNCIL.

Mr. Deputy Bullock	..	..	216
Mr. Deputy Welch	..	..	215
Edward Kemble	..	..	238
Thomas Simmonds	..	..	245

## MEMBERS OF THE WEST INDIA DOCK COMPANY.

William Chisholme	..	..	257
Henry Davidson	..	..	255
John Deffell	..	..	254
Thomas Gowland	..	..	239
James Johnston	..	..	246
William Lushington	..	..	263
David Lyon	..	..	249

Niell Malcolm	..	..	..	..	242
Robert Milligan	..	..	..	..	261
Thomas Plummer	..	..	..	..	262
Joseph Timperon	..	..	..	..	232
John Wedderburn	..	..	..	..	243
Henry Wildman	..	..	..	..	242

No other candidates received more than forty votes, and it is therefore not an unreasonable surmise that a selection had been agreed beforehand amongst the leading subscribers.

Mr. Alderman Champion died within a few days of his election and a special meeting of the company had to be called on the 24th August to appoint a director in his room. The choice fell upon Alderman Sir John Camer.

The first meeting of the directors was held at the house of Mr. George Hibbert in Mincing Lane on the 9th August. Mr. Hibbert was elected the first chairman of the board. It had been largely due to his energy that the scheme for the West India Docks had been carried. For a time he had been associated with Mr. Vaughan in the Wapping scheme, but he became convinced that the scheme for docks at the Isle of Dogs was the more comprehensive, and his association with the city as an alderman had doubtless facilitated the conversion of the corporation. Mr. Hibbert stood in a unique position, in being a West India merchant, a wharfinger and an alderman, and the combination of all the three chief conflicting interests in one able man affords the best explanation of the ultimate successful solution of the problems which had agitated the port for more than fifty years.

Mr. Hibbert was the son of Robert Hibbert, a West India merchant, and was born at Manchester in 1757. He became agent for Jamaica, and chairman of the committee of the West India merchants. He was a lucid and forcible speaker. In 1798 he was elected an alderman for the Ward of Bridge Within, with a view to his representing the city in Parliament. Being required to discharge the offices of Sheriff and Lord Mayor in successive years, just at the time when his personal attention was indispensable to the management of his house of business, he abandoned the prospect of representing the city and resigned his gown in 1803. In 1806 he was elected as one of the representatives for Seaford and sat for that borough until



1812. He was a patron of art and a collector of exotics. He was active in the foundation of the London Institution and was its president for many years. He died in 1837.

With Mr. Hibbert must be coupled the name of Mr. Robert Milligan, another West India merchant, who was elected deputy chairman, and who carried out the essential, if less public duty of organizing the working of the new undertaking.

Twenty-five years after the West India Dock Act was passed, the committee of the House of Commons on foreign trade bore testimony to the wisdom evinced in the original scheme of the docks and the public spirit and perseverance with which it was carried into execution, and in doing so, the committee felt it a debt of justice to mention the names of Mr. George Hibbert and Mr. Milligan, who, by devoting their time and talents to its accomplishment, had rendered an inestimable service to the trade of the metropolis. The colleagues of these two men left two memorials of the esteem with which they were regarded—one a painting of Mr. George Hibbert by Sir Thomas Lawrence, which to-day hangs in the board room of the Port of London Authority; and the other, a bronze statue of Mr. Robert Milligan, which is now placed at the main entrance gates of the West India Dock.

At the same meeting at which Mr. Hibbert and Mr. Milligan were appointed chairman and deputy chairman, Mr. Timothy Tyrell, the Remembrancer of the City of London, was appointed clerk and solicitor. Mr. Ralph Walker was appointed surveyor, and Mr. John Rennie was subsequently called in as consulting surveyor.

The first step taken was to acquire the lands and to settle the line of the canal and docks. The lands had under the Act to be acquired in the first instance by the city Corporation, and the position of the entrances both to canal and docks had to be agreed to by the Trinity House. Negotiations were immediately opened with this end in view, the directors wisely stipulating for the acquisition by them of as much uncovered land as could be obtained north of the docks. The Corporation showed great alacrity in treating with the owners of property, and sat twice a week for the purpose of expediting the purchases. The directors on their part gave themselves unsparingly to the design of the new dock, and the carrying out of the works.

The system of the West India Dock Company as approved by Parliament, is in its main outlines the West India Import and Export Docks as they are to be seen to-day. It consisted of the import dock, 2,600 ft. long by 500 ft. broad, covering an area of about thirty acres, with the export dock, south of and parallel to it, 2,600 ft. long and 400 ft. broad, with an area of twenty-four acres. At each end there was a basin connected with both docks and with the river. There were locks into the river at each end and also in the cuts that joined the basins to the docks. The basin at Blackwall was mainly for shipping, whilst that at Limehouse was for lighters. The obvious advantage gained by the site was that whilst vessels could get into the docks at the point nearest the sea, lighters conveying cargoes to London were saved the three miles journey round the Isle of Dogs. As most of the work of docking and undocking vessels was carried out near the time of high water, the separation of the shipping and lighter traffic prevented congestion. The basins were intended for and were used as large locks. Sometimes twenty vessels would come up on a tide. To lock in or out one ship at a time would have led to interminable delays, so the locks were opened some time before high water and remained so while vessels were hauled into and out of the basin. Then at high water the gates of the locks were closed, and the incoming vessels proceeded from the basin to their berths inside the dock. Compared with to-day's docks the width of the locks and the depth of the docks were, of course, on an insignificant scale. The principal lock was only 45 ft. wide and the deepest water obtainable in the dock was only 21 ft., with 5 ft. or 6 ft. less depth at neap tides, but it must be remembered that the largest vessels then in the West India trade were only of 350 tons burthen, whilst the lock, limited as it was according to modern standards, could at spring tides take vessels of 1,000 tons net register.

Round the import docks on the north, east and west sides sites were appointed for large warehouses, three of which were finished by the time the dock was opened. Additional warehouses were soon afterwards built, giving a continuous line of nearly three quarters of a mile of warehouses, most of them of five stories. They were far in advance of anything in London or any other port at that time, and even to-day no





OPENING OF THE WEST INDIA DOCKS, 1802.  
THE "HENRY ADDINGTON" DECORATED WITH THE COLOURS OF ALL NATIONS.  
*From a picture by P. O. Tomkins.*





port in the country contains so striking a range of buildings devoted to the storage of merchandize. Though now nearly 120 years old the buildings show no sign of decay. On the south side of the import dock was the quay reserved for rum with vaults underneath, and storing ground and sheds for timber. The export dock had but few buildings in it, as goods for export were usually brought alongside by cart and lighter and put on board at once. Steam and hydraulic power were not then applied to machinery. Crane power was human power applied to winches, in some cases on the treadmill principle. Vessels were hauled either with ropes by gangs of men walking along the quays, or were towed by men operating in large rowing boats.

What marked the West India Dock scheme above all the other dock systems created during the ensuing fifty years was the broad spacious plan upon which the whole scheme was designed. For the moment, nothing more need be said on this feature beyond the fact that in 1895 it was possible, by enlarging the entrance lock and cuttings at Blackwall and dredging the dock bottom, to make the dock available for vessels of 8,000 tons burthen. In a few years from the present time, by further alteration of entrances and other works, vessels of 20,000 tons will be able to use the dock.

The ceremony of laying the first stone of the new works was performed on the 12th July, 1800, the first anniversary of the day on which the Royal assent had been given to the Act of Parliament for making the dock. The national character of the event is indicated by the names of those who took the leading part in it. The company assembled at the London Tavern at one o'clock and moved in the following procession to the Isle of Dogs :—

The Directors of the West India Dock Company  
 Lord Loughborough (Lord Chancellor)  
 Earl Spencer (First Lord of the Admiralty)  
 Lord Hawkesbury (Master of the Mint)  
 The Rt. Hon. William Pitt (First Lord of the Treasury  
 and Chancellor of the Exchequer)  
 The Rt. Hon. Henry Dundas (Secretary of War)  
 The Rt. Hon. Dudley Ryder (Vice-President of the  
 Board of Trade)

The Rt. Hon. Thomas Steele  
 The Rt. Hon. Silvester Douglas (a Lord of the Treasury)  
 Sir Joseph Banks, Bart. (President of the Royal Society)  
 Sir Andrew S. Hamond, Bart. (Comptroller of the Navy)  
 and a numerous train of members of Parliament, including those of the Select Committee of the House of Commons who had reported on the Bill.

Soon after two o'clock, the procession arrived at the works. The stone had been previously prepared to receive two glass bottles, one of which contained the several coins of the reign of George III, and in the other the following inscription in Latin with a translation thereof was placed :—

Of this range of Buildings  
 Constructed, together with the Adjacent Docks  
 At the expense of public-spirited individuals,  
 Under the sanction of a provident legislature  
 And with the liberal co-operation of the Corporate Body  
 of the City of London  
 For the distinct Purpose  
 Of complete security and ample accommodation  
 (Hitherto not afforded)  
 To the shipping and produce of the West Indies at this  
 Wealthy Port

#### THE FIRST STONE WAS LAID

On Saturday, the twelfth Day of July, A.D. 1800  
 by the concurring hands of

THE RIGHT HONOURABLE LORD LOUGHBOROUGH  
 Lord High Chancellor of Great Britain ;

THE RIGHT HONOURABLE WILLIAM PITT  
 First Lord Commissioner of His Majesty's Treasury  
 And Chancellor of His Majesty's Exchequer  
 GEORGE HIBBERT, ESQ., the Chairman  
 and

ROBERT MILLIGAN, ESQ., the Deputy Chairman  
 of the WEST INDIA DOCK COMPANY

The two former conspicuous in the Band  
 Of those illustrious Statesmen  
 Who in either House of Parliament have been zealous to  
 promote

The two latter distinguished among those chosen to direct,

#### AN UNDERTAKING

Which, under the Favour of GOD, shall contribute  
 Stability, Increase and Ornament  
 to  
 BRITISH COMMERCE.



The bottles being deposited in the recesses made to receive them and also a plate with the directors' names engraved thereon, Mr. Timothy Tyrell, the clerk and solicitor to the company, read the inscription, the stone was raised by four of the "noble and honourable persons named for that purpose" and laid in the proper position. The spectators then gave three times three hearty cheers and declared their best wishes for the success of the undertaking.

No. 5 Warehouse, on the North Quay of the Import Dock, was subsequently erected over the site of the ceremony, and the Clock Tower over it contains a copy of the inscription in English.

After the ceremony the company viewed the works in progress and returned from Blackwall in the barges belonging to the Admiralty and Navy Boards, which were in attendance on the occasion. The river was covered with boats of every description, and the day was treated as a holiday. The current description of the events concludes with the statement that an elegant entertainment was provided at the London Tavern, where the Duke of Portland and several other noblemen and gentlemen of distinction joined the company, and the remainder of the day passed with great conviviality, the toasts after dinner including the following :—

The King and Constitution with repeated plaudits.

Success to the works at the Isle of Dogs, and may our corner stone stand firm under the weight of increasing commerce.

Prosperity to the City of London, and may every successive improvement of its Port produce the need of more.

Prosperity to the West India Colonies.

Lord Hawkesbury and the Gentlemen of the Select Committee of the House of Commons for improving the Port of London : thanks to them for their past, and success to their future labours.

The Noblemen and Gentlemen who supported in Parliament the establishment of the West India Dock Company.

Alderman Skinner and the Gentlemen of the Port Committee of the City of London : thanks to them for their faithful attention to the concerns of the West India Dock Company.

Peace with security and honour, or war with unanimity and vigour.

Success to the Union between England and Ireland, and may the United Kingdom experience in the centuries to come as much prosperity as in the century past.

At what hour the company broke up is not recorded. Each of the nine toasts mentioned would afford the orators who spoke as proposers and seconders scope for a lengthy speech. It would scarcely be possible to-day for a Committee of the House of Commons to be toasted at "elegant entertainments" by the promoters of successful dock schemes. What toast William Pitt was in charge of does not appear, but we can imagine that "peace with security and honour," with its alternative, so appropriate to our later war years, might well have been entrusted to him—and with his imperial instincts have impelled him to utter words which would for the time transform the conviviality of the gathering into solemn and serious thought of the issues then developing in the Continent. The toast itself may have been the unconscious precursor of Lord Beaconsfield's message to the British people on his return from the Berlin Conference.

The construction of the dock was much facilitated by the gravelly character of the subsoil, which provided excellent foundations for the walls, and within a little more than two years from the laying of the foundation stone the dock was ready for the reception of shipping. Only one untoward accident occurred during construction. On the 22nd July, 1802, the outer dam at the Blackwall entrance burst, filling the basin with 22 feet of water and drowning eight workmen, but the inner dam saved the dock itself from flooding. The public opening of the docks took place on the 22nd August, 1802, in the presence of Henry Addington, the Prime Minister, the first ship being a light vessel named after him, decorated with the flags of all nations. The *Henry Addington* was followed by the *Echo*, containing between 800 and 900 hogsheads of sugar.

The opening of the docks was followed by legislation, in 1802, dealing with several details of management, including the following :—The requirement of the original Act for a wall 30 feet high round the premises was repealed, and walls 20 feet high at the east and west ends of the docks only, were substituted. The gates and doors of the premises were to be under joint locks of the company and the Revenue. The hours of opening and closing the gates were fixed. No holidays were to be allowed, except on





WEST INDIA DOCKS  
From an aquatint by BLUCK after a picture by ROWLANDSON and PUGIN





Sundays, Christmas Day, Good Friday and general fasts, and thanksgivings. No one was to enter the docks during the closed time, unless accompanied by a guard. The regulations as to fires and lights appear to have been unworkable, and they were made more elastic. By the same Act the capital powers were extended to £800,000, and in the following year to £1,200,000.

It has been related how Walpole fell from office in 1741 as the consequence of his having adopted the scheme for allowing goods to remain in bonded warehouses without payment of the duties, and without, therefore, the necessity of obtaining drawbacks when the goods were required for exportation. The system which Walpole failed to carry was established as the result of the inauguration of the dock system, and London thereby became an entrepôt port on a far larger scale than it had attained up to the end of the eighteenth century. The Act of Parliament under which this enormous change in the customs system of the country was passed in 1803, and is known as the Warehousing Act. It began with a declaration that it would encourage trade if merchandise were permitted to be entered and secured in London and other ports without payment of customs and excise duties on first entry into the country, and that it should thereafter be lawful for importers of sugar and other West India goods to lodge them in the warehouses of the West India Docks, subject to the safeguard of joint locks of the Crown and merchant. The warehouses of the London Dock Company were to be similarly privileged for rice, tobacco, wine, brandy, and geneva. The Treasury's approval was necessary to any warehouse proposed for these purposes, and no bond was signed from the merchant or dock company. Cork, mahogany, pitch, resin, tallow, timber and turpentine, skins, fish oil, indigo, dried fruit, quick-silver, and a variety of fine goods imported from the Tropics might be stored in other approved places in London on a bond being given for double duties, a condition being added that full duties should be paid within twelve months of entry. The Treasury were permitted to extend the list of goods which might be warehoused free of duty, and it was clearly the intention gradually to allow the benefit of the system to the whole of the traders of the Kingdom. The privileges were to be accompanied by many regulations

and precautions for the protection of the revenue. The nature of the contents had to be marked on each package ; goods were not to be exported in vessels of less than 70 tons, nor were they allowed to leave the country in any but original or similar packages containing no less than 100 gallons of spirits or 45 gallons of wine. All imports for export had to be re-examined ; goods entered for exportation and fraudulently relanded ; and the vessels concerned in such transactions were to be forfeited. Goods not cleared within fifteen months of landing were to be sold or destroyed. No two articles subjected to different duties were to be stored together. Customs officers were to be present at delivery of all goods. Duty was payable on deficiencies on original weights or measures of goods. On the other hand, duties were remitted on goods destroyed by fire. Rum shipped as stores for consumption on ships was exempted from duty, and importers were allowed to draw samples and to examine their goods at any time in the presence of a revenue officer.

The Act stipulated that the privileges granted to the West India and London Dock Companies were not to be affected by the new legislation. It must be added that though the avowed intention of the Act was to secure a freer movement of merchandise, it placed in the hands of the Treasury a vast amount of patronage in the power to create, preserve, or destroy bonded warehouse property.



## CHAPTER IX

# The City Canal

THE canal to the south of the West India Docks authorized by the West India Dock Act, was not completed until three years after the docks were opened. The first ship towed in was a fine West Indiaman of 500 tons burthen, the *Duchess of York*. She must have been a light vessel, as if laden she would have gone into the West India Dock to discharge. The date was the 9th December, 1805, and the occasion was treated with all the usual public demonstrations.

From the beginning, the canal which cost £168,800, was a failure as a financial venture. The expense of maintenance exceeded the revenue, and after some years' experience the Treasury, which had to bear the loss of interest on the capital advanced by them, urged the City to sell the property.

For the first three years the canal had, in accordance with the 1799 Act, been opened free of dues, and the following vessels, including barges, had used the canal :—

1805-6	5,950	vessels	of 274,377 tons
1806-7	7,601	„	of 241,472 tons
1807-8	5,448	„	of 221,636 tons

The average expenses during these three years had been £2,558 per annum.

In 1812, the income was £3,939 and the expenses £3,373. Of this income, £2,480 was derived from charges for allowing vessels to lie up, and only £1,459 from vessels in transit, rents of lands, etc.

By 1822 the income had diminished to £2,962, of which only £640 was for transit charges, whilst the expenses were £3,186.

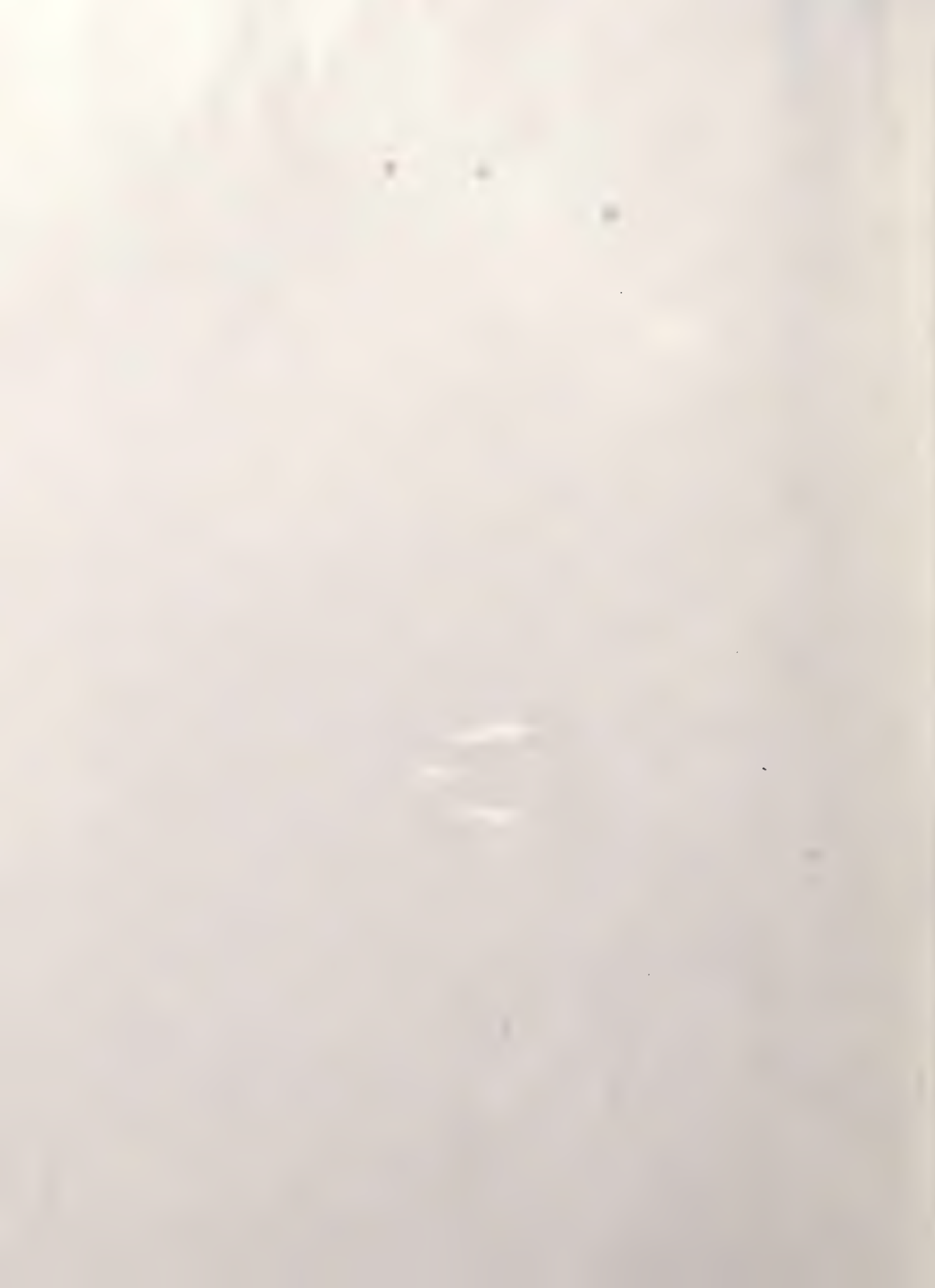
Offers came from merchants to purchase the property but shipowners objected, contending that the canal should be widened into a dock. In 1829 the property was sold to the West India Dock Company for £120,000, and subsequently widened into a dock for discharging timber vessels. The water space was chiefly used for

the storage of floated timber. Between 1866 and 1870 the Dock was reconstructed, and became the South West India Dock of to-day.

It may be considered as being wise after the event, but it seems difficult to understand how the enterprise as it was carried out ever came to be undertaken by the City. Possibly the City may have been influenced by the general wave of enthusiasm then prevalent for canal schemes. The original conception of a canal from Blackwall to Wapping, forming as it were a long entrance to the docks there, which formed part of the merchants' scheme of 1796, had some arguments in its favour. It would have saved tiresome and difficult navigation round the reaches, and also the crowded traffic between Deptford and Wapping, and would therefore have meant that the vessel virtually docked at Blackwall. The City Canal which took its place merely saved two miles of navigation but, on the other hand, necessitated a double locking in and out of the canal, hauling through the canal (for which labour had to be employed) and on leaving the canal vessels had still to negotiate the most crowded part of the river. It must be remembered that in favourable conditions of wind and tide, it was both safer and quicker to sail round the island than to use the canal, especially after the making of the West India Docks had removed the larger vessels out of moorings there into the docks. As steam tugs for towing ships came into use, any prospect of the growth of trade benefiting the canal was destroyed, and its fate was then finally sealed.









## CHAPTER X

# The London Dock Company

THE rival scheme of docks at Wapping which, as related above, was the scheme originally favoured by traders, was sanctioned on the 20th June, 1800, when the Royal Assent was given to the London Dock Bill. The name given to this undertaking was doubtless due to the desire of the promoters to emphasize the fact that their dock was in London, whilst the West India Dock was in the suburbs. The name has, however, turned out to be an inconvenient one, as except to those actually engaged in shipping transactions at the Port, the London Dock is often confused with the general system of the docks in London.

Much of the Act for the London Dock is naturally based upon the legislation just before passed for the West India Dock Company, but there were different circumstances in the launching of the two undertakings which made special provisions necessary.

The preamble stated that the London Dock Company was formed for making wet docks "as near as may be to the City of London and seat of commerce," and enumerates the names of some 200 persons who had agreed to become subscribers. Included in the list are some of the subscribers to the West India Dock, and also some of the witnesses who had favoured the old régime when the House of Commons had held their inquiry. It is of interest to note that the company was authorized to use steam engines in connexion with their buildings. The proprietors mentioned in the Act, or forty-five of them, were required to meet at the Merchant Seamen's Office, Royal Exchange, within a month of the passing of the Act and to proceed to the "execution of the Act." For all subsequent meetings the City or the Tower Hamlets might provide the venue. Within two months the company were to elect twenty-four "Directors and Managers," for one year, together with the Lord Mayor who, as Conservator of the Thames, was to be a director. The scheme for the retirement of members of

the board for one year in five was not applied to this board. The procedure in regard to internal matters of management of the company was left more to the company itself than in the case of the West India Dock Company. The capital stock was limited to £1,200,000, with power to borrow a further £300,000. A feature in the character of the dock authorized was that a dock for lighters was provided for. So far as can be learned this part of the scheme did not mature. None of the entrances from the river were to be deeper than fifteen inches below low water mark. The Shadwell water works were to be purchased for £50,000.

The rates authorized on vessels using the dock were as follows :—

1ST CLASS.	Vessels trading coastwise, including colliers, 1s. per ton.
2ND CLASS.	Vessels trading to Ireland, the North Sea, and the English Channel, 1s. 3d. per ton.
3RD CLASS.	Vessels trading to the Baltic and Archangel, 1s. 6d. per ton.
4TH CLASS.	Vessels trading to South of Ushant, the west coast of Spain and Portugal and Newfoundland, 1s. 9d. per ton.
5TH CLASS.	Vessels trading to the Mediterranean, Africa, and America, 2s. per ton.
6TH CLASS.	Vessels trading to the East Indies, Persia and China, 2s. 6d. per ton.

It must be observed that these rates were merely for entering and leaving the dock, and did not include any labour services to the vessel, or any stay in the dock.

No schedule of the rates chargeable on goods is included in the Act, it being stated that such rates were not to exceed those payable in the port in the year 1798. No provision was made for any increased rates if labour or other expenses were augmented. Those charges had, however, been high, and afforded a sufficient margin for contingencies. A monopoly similar to that applying to the West India Company was granted to the London Dock Company by an enactment that for twenty-one years all vessels laden with tobacco, rice, wine and brandy, except from the East and West Indies, were to unload and land their cargoes in the London Dock. Vessels with small quantities of these goods were exempted from this provision, and those with fruit on board as part cargo were allowed to discharge the fruit



outside the docks. Vessels were allowed to use the docks for six weeks for the purpose of unloading, subject to paying a rent of  $\frac{1}{4}$ d. per ton for the first two weeks after entrance, and  $\frac{1}{2}$ d. a ton for every further week. The Dockmaster was given power to order out of the dock any light or derelict vessels which in his opinion encumbered the docks. The principle of compensation to the owners of legal quays, sufferance wharves, and the other interests which might be detrimentally affected by the opening of the new docks was recognized by this Act as well as in the West India Dock Act. The same commissioners appointed for this purpose under the West India Dock Act were appointed by the London Dock Act, but a new provision in relation to this matter authorized the Treasury within two years to purchase the legal quays and warehouses "usually occupied or employed therewith" between the Tower and London Bridge, either by agreement with the owners or lessees or subject to the price being settled by a jury. The compensation fund provided by the new port dues on vessels under the West India Dock Act was to be made available for any claims payable, and power was given to raise those dues (with the consent of the Treasury) should they not produce the full sum required. The rights of the corporation as conservators were not to be prejudiced.

The first meeting of the company was held on the 9th July, 1800, and as directed by the Act, took place at the Merchant Seamen's office. Sir Richard Neave was voted to the chair, and after several resolutions of congratulation and thanks, the meeting proceeded to the election of directors, the selection being as follows :—

THOMAS BAINBRIDGE  
CHRISTOPHER BAYNES  
THOMAS BODDINGTON  
JOHN BRICKWOOD  
ALEXANDER CHAMPION  
CHRISTOPHER COURT  
ROBERT CURLING  
WILLIAM DEVAYNES  
JOHN DUNNAGE  
EDWARD FORSTER  
JOSEPH HUDDART  
ROBERT HUNTER

JOHN INGLIS  
THOMAS KING  
WILLIAM LENNOX  
BEESTON LONG  
CHARLES MILLS  
SIR RICHARD NEAVE, BART.  
WILLIAM RAIKES  
JAMES REED  
PHILIP SANSOM  
SAMUEL TURNER  
WILLIAM VAUGHAN  
GEORGE WARD

The Lord Mayor intimated that he would not be so frequent in his attendances as the rest of the directors, but would attend whenever he could be of any particular service.

On the next day, the first meeting of the new board took place. Sir Richard Neave was appointed chairman, and Mr. Forster, deputy chairman. Mr. George Robinson was appointed secretary, with a salary of £300 per annum, and Mr. Daniel Alexander, surveyor. In regard to the appointment of directors, it was ordained that at every election for directors, four persons should be chosen who were not members of the preceding board, thus conforming to the rule laid down by Parliament in the West India Dock for the annual retirement of a section of the board, though no such obligation had been placed on the London Company by Parliament. The by-laws adopted at the meeting included the provision of fortnightly meetings of the board, and for the withdrawal of a director when any question affecting him personally was under discussion, also that no director should go beyond the sea without the leave of his colleagues, and that no salary be paid to the directors until the works were productive, but that at every meeting of board or committee a sum not exceeding 10s. 6d. for each member of the board or committee should be divided between the members present at the beginning of business. Officers and servants were to be sworn into office, with a declaration that they would faithfully, diligently, and to the utmost of their power, execute the duties of their offices, and that they would not directly or indirectly give any advice or be concerned in any transaction contrary to the interests of the company. Three joint solicitors were appointed during the pleasure of the directors, and this meeting concluded with the appointment of a committee of five with the chairman and deputy chairman, to suggest arrangements for carrying the London Dock Act into execution. The committee of five were Mr. Baynes, Mr. Boddington, Mr. Long, Mr. Sansom, and Mr. Vaughan.

The task which was laid upon the directors of the London Dock Company was more severe than that which the West India Dock directors had to face. The acquisition of the site, which included a large amount of house property, was a much more complicated operation than at the Isle of Dogs, and the cost of the properties considerably exceeded the



estimates. It was decided to construct a dock of twenty acres, with a basin and river lock. The present Western Dock and Wapping Basin of the London Dock, save for the jetty and the narrowing of the northern side by the false quay recently constructed, are the original works so decided upon. By January, 1802, all that could be reported by the directors was that much ground had been cleared; that many materials had been purchased and were on the premises; and that considerable preparations had been made for a vigorous prosecution of the works early in the spring. During the following months contracts were made for various works, the excavation was begun, and two powerful steam engines for draining the works and one for grinding mortar had been put to work. An agreement was made with the Treasury for building warehouses to contain 24,000 hogsheads of tobacco on the eastern side of the dock, and preparations were being made to erect warehouses on the north side of the dock for the general trade of the port.

The foundation stone was laid on Saturday afternoon, the 26th June, 1802. A witness present on the occasion reports that a vast concourse of persons assembled from all quarters, and that "the docks were crowded with genteel persons of both sexes." Henry Addington, then Prime Minister and Chancellor of the Exchequer, Lord Hawkesbury and Lord Hobart and other distinguished personages were conducted round the works next the river to the foundation of the entrance basin (now the Wapping Basin) where two stones were prepared to be laid, each about  $2\frac{1}{2}$  tons in weight. The first stone was laid by Henry Addington, Lord Hawkesbury, Sir Richard Neave (chairman), and Edward Forster (deputy chairman). When this stone was laid, two glass bottles containing current gold, silver and copper coins, with a medal of the King's recovery and the Peace of Amiens, were deposited in a hole made in the stone, and over them a tin plate containing the following inscription:—

THIS STONE

was laid on Saturday, the 26th day of June  
Anno Dom. 1802  
in the foundation of the Entrance Basin  
of the  
London Docks

Undertaken by private subscription  
for  
the greater accommodation and security  
of  
shipping, commerce and revenue  
within  
the Port of London  
and pursuant to an Act passed on the 20th day of  
June, Ann: Dom: 1800. In the 40th year of the  
reign of George III.

The Chancellor of the Exchequer threw a purse of gold on the stone for the workmen, and then the second stone was laid. Three times three cheers were given both to the first and second stones. When this operation was performed the foundation stones in the tobacco warehouse were laid (the warehouse is the large single storied warehouse at the existing Tobacco dock, originally used for tobacco but now a show floor for skins). The same ceremony, including the purse of gold for the workmen, was gone through. The company then proceeded in waggons covered with green baize, and laid the foundation of another warehouse. Joining carriages which were waiting in Ratcliff Highway, the company were conveyed to the London Tavern, where 100 guests partook of "an excellent dinner," followed by appropriate toasts.

The progress made during the following months enabled the directors to report on the 5th January, 1803, that the cofferdam at Bell Dock, *i.e.*, the point where the entrance lock to the basin was being constructed, had been finished, and the quay-wall of the dock built for more than one-third of its length, and that generally the advance had been as rapid as could be expected considering the magnitude and importance of the work. But from the guarded tones of the next report it may be gathered that some disappointments had occurred. In November, 1803, we find that though the whole of the quay-walls had been finished, delays were taking place in the delivery of materials. Labour was scarce (occasioned by the labourers being called away on military service) and the excavation of the dock had been interfered with, and further the cost of materials and labour had considerably increased. In acquainting the proprietors with this disagreeable news, the directors added that a large sum had to be spent in the purchase of the



Shadwell water works, and that they had found it expedient to purchase buildings and ground, not immediately necessary, in view of possible extensions to the eastward. They therefore advised the proprietors to apply to Parliament for leave to raise further capital to the extent of £500,000. This advice was taken and an Act obtained.

Twelve months afterwards, on the 4th December, 1804, the directors confessed to a meeting of proprietors that unavoidable interruption had defeated the expectation that the dock would have been opened for business before that date, explaining that the uncertain delivery of materials, the impossibility of obtaining and keeping together a sufficient number of workmen (many of whom had at times been called off for national work) and other unforeseen circumstances, in an undertaking so extensive and unexampled, had delayed the completion of the works.

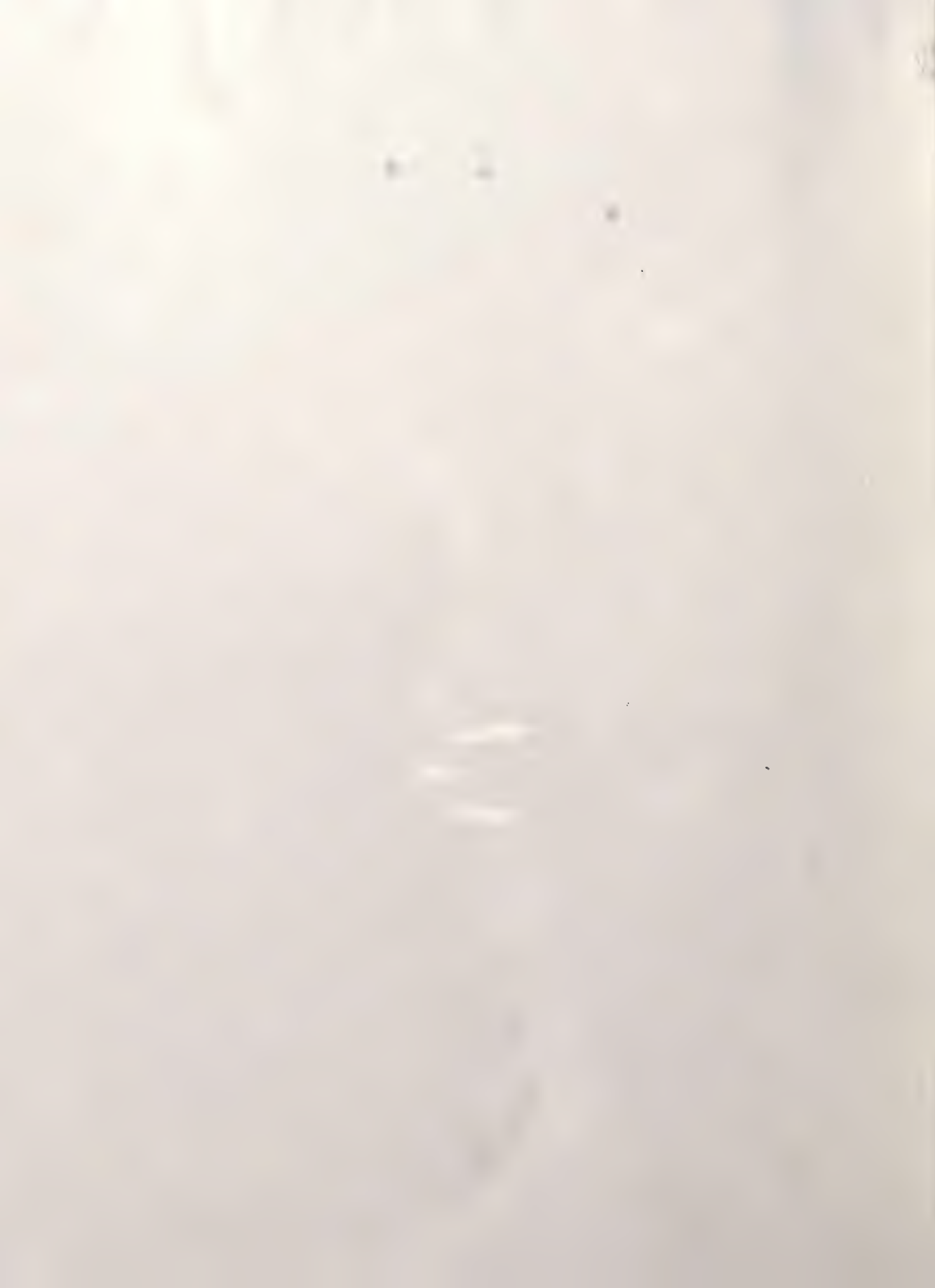
In less than two months afterwards the dock was ready for receiving ships, and the first ship entered the dock on the 31st January, 1805. Though all the warehouses were not finished, the directors were able at the end of March to state that they were prepared to receive and accommodate various cargoes of merchandise that had been sent into the dock in preference to their being discharged in the river or landed at the wharves, including several Spanish prizes. They concluded by asking power to raise another £500,000 if necessary. Again Parliament gave the requisite assent.

This Bill was followed by almost annual applications to Parliament during the following thirteen years. In 1807, the Shadwell water works were acquired and worked by the Dock Company, though the supplies extended to Bow, Stratford and West Ham. In 1809 a short Act was obtained, validating certain contracts anterior to the Act, for purchase of properties, and other minor purposes. Another large capital issue was sanctioned in 1810, when £750,000 was authorized by Parliament. Disputes which had arisen with merchants on the subject of the charges on wines and spirits were settled by the Act of 1811, in which regulations and schedules of rates on these goods were made statutory. In 1812 an Act was passed giving further time for completion of the works, also an Act in 1814 for a still further extension. Further capital of £300,000 was authorized in 1815, and three years later the Company were again applying to

Parliament for powers to purchase more land to complete the Hermitage basin and entrance. The same Act of 1818 contains evidence of the beginning of abuse of the free water clause in favour of lighters, by the enactment that lighters were to be removable from the docks twenty-four hours after finishing work. The Shadwell Waterworks undertaking was carried on by the Dock Company until 1827, when it was acquired by the East London Waterworks Company.









## CHAPTER XI

# The East India Dock Company

**E**QUAL in importance in character, if not in volume, to the West India trade was that of the East Indies at the time of the discussions at the end of the eighteenth century on the future of the Port of London. The essential difference between the methods of carrying on the trades was that, whilst the West India trade was controlled by a large number of individual merchants, the East India Company had all the interests in India consolidated in its hands. The East India Company was not represented at the various Parliamentary proceedings and took no part in the struggle. It had, as a matter of fact, little to complain of. Being a powerful organization, it had been able to make its own arrangements in the Port. The vessels were the largest in the Port, though the tonnage of 750 tons of their largest vessels in 1796 does not now appear to the present generation of any considerable magnitude. The largest vessels often loaded at Greenhithe. They, however, usually discharged in the deep water at Blackwall, and never went higher up the river than Deptford. The opportunities for thieves getting away in the less crowded waters below Deptford were not so favourable as in the Port. The cargoes were more valuable than any that discharged in London, and for this reason the company did not hesitate to spend money on a staff to protect their cargoes against the depredators which made the lives of the West India merchants unbearable. But the chief factor in ensuring the company's comparative immunity from the abuses of the Port was the quasi military system which prevailed through the whole of the East India Company's organization, and the higher emoluments of its service. These led to greater efficiency and attracted a better type of official, with a corresponding improvement in the class of labourer employed. The higher standard of efficiency extended to the warehouses in town, in which the Company's goods were housed. These warehouses were of a far superior class to those at the legal quays. An inspection of the existing warehouses of the Port of London Authority

in Cutler Street, built in 1782, and the only survivors of the East India Company's town warehouses, will show that for the general purposes intended nothing more substantial could be built to-day. Both the brickwork and the timber are in as excellent condition as when they were first erected.

All these advantages might have been an inducement to the East India Company to allow their vessels to remain in the river. But in the session of 1803 the company, following the general tendency of traders, promoted a Bill for the formation of an undertaking, subsidiary to their own, for the construction of docks at Blackwall, under the name of the East India Dock Company. The directors may have feared that the attacks of a combination of the predatory bands which had lost their occupation by the making of the West India and London Docks, might be concentrated on the East India trade, and prove too formidable for the company to beat off, or, more probably, they may have realized the advantages of keeping their home fleet together in one system of closed wet docks, less than three miles, by road, of their town warehouses, and adjoining the chief ship-building and repairing yards on the Thames.

The Bill became an Act on the 27th July, 1803. The Act recites that the vessels of the East India Company were of larger size than in any other trade, many of them being equal in size to men-of-war, and that various subscribers had amalgamated together to make docks at Blackwall. The subscribers included the names of several directors of the East India Company, the chairman of the London Dock, and some of the directors of the West India and London Dock Companies. The capital proposed was £200,000, with power to increase it to £300,000. The first directors were appointed by the Act, and were :—

J. ROBERTS  
S. WILLIAMS  
J. COTTON  
W. THORNTON  
SIR W. CURTIS  
J. ATKINS  
H. BONHAM  
ABEL CHAPMAN  
J. HUDDART  
R. LEWIN, JUN.

} Four Directors of the  
East India Company.



W. WILLIAMS, JUN.  
ROBERT WIGRAM  
J. WOOLMORE

The East India Company reserved to themselves the appointment of four of the directors. All ships arriving from the East Indies or China were to load in the East India Dock, save such as the Customs authorities might keep at Long Reach, to lighten. The goods brought into the docks were to be stored in the East India Company's warehouses in London. The penalty for non-conformity with this rule was £500 for each offence. The limitation of twenty-one years on this monopoly was imposed upon the company. Outward bound East India or China ships were to load in the East India Docks or, if in the river, it must be below Limehouse Creek. No other vessels were to use the docks, except ships for or from the East, unless by the consent of the East India Company. There were compensation clauses for the benefit of dry dock owners at Northfleet and other dry dock owners who might be prejudicially affected by the removal of the business out of the river, the tribunal again being the same as in the case of the legal quays under the West India Dock Act. The rates chargeable were high, and confirm the supposition that the East India Company had been put to great expense on discharging and loading their ships in the river. British ships were to pay 14s. a ton, including discharging and loading the cargoes and stores with six months' free use of the dock. Country ships, *i.e.*, ships built in India, were to pay 12s. New ships loading outward only, were charged 4s. a ton. Vessels discharging only, received a rebate of 2s. a ton, or if going out of trade a rebate of 4s. a ton. On goods landed at the docks a charge of 2s. a ton was made to the buyers of such goods. The provisions for the protection of the public, for the making of by-laws and for the management and regulation of business at the docks, were based upon the legislation dealing with these subjects in the West India Dock Act.

The first meeting of the board was held at 8 Warnford Court, Throgmorton Street, on the 5th August, 1803, when Mr. Joseph Cotton was elected chairman, and Mr. John Woolmore deputy chairman. Mr. Timothy Tyrell was appointed the solicitor, while Mr. John Rennie and Mr.

Ralph Walker were appointed joint engineers. The other business transacted at this meeting included settling an application to the East India Company for their subscription to the undertaking, the purchase of a steam engine from Hull, the decision to provide coats of arms in the Court Room, and the appointment of a surveyor and stationer.

The site of the new docks included the Brunswick Dock, which had been built in the late eighteenth century by Mr. Perry. The Mast House, a building 120 ft. high, for lifting masts in and out of vessels and stowing the sails and rigging of East Indiamen, serving as a conspicuous landmark was left on the new site and was not taken down till 1862. The pair of docks were made into one dock by the East India Dock Company, and became what is to-day, the East India Export Dock. A larger dock of eighteen acres now the East India Import Dock was built parallel with it to the north for import business and communication between the two docks was effected through a basin also communicating with the river.

The preparations for making the dock occupied a considerable time, especially seeing that the properties to be acquired were smaller and that there were fewer buildings on them than in the case of the West India and London Docks, and it was not till the 4th March, 1805, that the first stone was laid by Captain Joseph Huddart with the usual ceremonies. If the preparations were long, the work was carried out with great expedition, the dock being opened on the 4th August, 1806. The *Globe* of the day gave the following report :—

*Opening of the New East India Dock.*—Yesterday this ceremony, so auspicious to the increasing commerce and prosperity of the British Empire, took place according to previous announcement. Several thousand tickets had been distributed on the occasion to the India Stock proprietors and their friends by order of the directors, as well as to a very numerous circle of the nobility and gentry in town, who, aware of the splendour and vivacity which distinguish every exhibition connected with the naval prosperity of this country, were, of course extremely solicitous to obtain orders for admission to this scene. Shortly before two, the signal of the Royal salute was fired from six pieces of flying artillery, being the regimental guns of the Company's Volunteers, for the destined ships to enter at tide of flood ; immediately upon which the elegant little yacht of the Trinity House, decked



to her masthead in the naval finery of flags and streamers of all nations, led into the basin in a very elegant style, followed by the "Admiral Gardner," East Indiaman, with the British anchor at her fore-topmasthead, the Royal Standard at her main, and the Union Flag at her mizen ; and displaying from the lower rigging the colours of all nations, the French under all. As she passed in, she answered the salute of the Regimental Artillery by firing her minute guns, while the company's band, on her quarter-deck, played "Rule Britannia" with full chorus from the ladies and gentlemen who crowded her decks. Among the accommodations prepared for the greater security and better convenience of their trade, through the medium of this dock, appeared 60 close covered carriages, or light wagons, each mounted on four wheels and capable of conveying 50 chests of tea each from the landing to their stores at the India House, which will place the whole trade under the immediate care of their own servants. An elegant dinner was given in the evening by the directors at the London Tavern.

As in the case of the other two companies, the original estimates proved insufficient for completing the works, and in 1806 the issue of £100,000 more capital stock was authorized. Of this £10,000 was a subscription towards the making of the Commercial and East India Dock Roads. It may be convenient here to point out that the original highway between London and Poplar ran along the river through Ratcliff Highway to High Street, Poplar. This thoroughfare was a very narrow and crowded one throughout, and unfit for the heavy land traffic such as hogsheads of sugar, created by the construction of the West India Dock. In the first days of the history of the East and West India Docks the directors of the companies took steps to make an entirely new road—the Commercial Road—for the purpose of dock traffic. It commenced at Cannon Street Road (which afforded the route through Whitechapel Road to the City), and ended a little east of Limehouse church. Here the road to the West India Dock branched off to the south east, and that to the East India Dock went eastward till it reached the dock. The Commercial Road Company, of which Alderman Hibbert was the chairman, owned the roads and took tolls until the turnpikes were abolished. It is to the formation of these two dock road systems that London owes this fine route into the county of Essex.

## CHAPTER XII

# The Settlement of Claims of the Legal Quays and other Interests

THE claims of the owners of the legal quays were met by the exercise of the right of purchase given to the Government by the West India Dock Act. The total price paid for the purchase was £468,087. The rentals received from the properties by the Government after purchase, shown in the following statement, indicate that the cost of getting rid of this section of the vested interests was not excessive :—

		£
1815	..	19,821
1816	..	18,160
1817	..	16,647
1818	..	19,223
1819	..	18,682
1820	..	14,867
1821	..	13,685
1822	..	12,068
1823	..	15,400

The reduction in receipts for the later years is due to the fact that the Government were in possession of Fresh Wharf and derived additional revenues from wharfage not shown in the statement.

The claims received from the other interests were as follows :—

	<i>No. of claim.</i>	<i>Amount of claim. £</i>
CLASS 1. Freeholders, leaseholders, wharfingers, and warehousekeepers ..	170	2,082,769
CLASS 2. Corporation of London and their appointees, City Companies, Tacklehouse porters, and Ticket porters .. .. .	280	313,052
CLASS 3. Carmen, carriers, and merchants for additional expenses .. ..	275	472,765
CLASS 4. Lightermen, foremen lightermen, jumpers, watchmen, and gangmen ..	128	426,737
CLASS 5. Coopers, clerks to wharfingers, victuallers, and miscellaneous ..	115	410,096
Total claims		<u>£3,705,419</u>



There were twenty-six other claims made without specifying any amount.

The majority of the claims were settled by agreement or were withdrawn. Forty-two were determined by the Court of King's Bench, or by juries.

The total sum awarded to the claimants was £677,382, divided amongst the classes as follows :—

				£
Class 1	..	..		419,199
" 2	..	..		27,250
" 3	..	..		74,417
" 4	..	..		81,916
" 5	..	..		74,600
				<hr/>
				£677,382

being £3,028,037 less than the original sums claimed.

The settlement was protracted and costly to all concerned. The last claims were not disposed of until August, 1823. The accountants employed by the commissioners received £5,663, and the surveyors £8,903. The clerk to the commissioners, Mr. Timothy Tyrell (also the first secretary of the West India Dock Company, and the solicitor to the East India Dock Company), received £7,000. Other items brought the total expense of the proceedings up to £40,922.

Lord Gwydyr and others received £142,136 in respect of rights of mooring chains.

The total expenditure on compensation and the costs of settling it may therefore be taken as about £860,000.

It will be seen that the bulk of the claims must have been far in excess of the awards. Four of the claimants got nothing, viz., the Grocers' Company who claimed £8,000, Lord Barham £6,000, the Sterry Trustees £2,420, and the Vintners' Company £16,312. Edmund Godsell claimed £9,310 and was awarded £1,350. S. Sollis claimed £19,989, and was awarded £2,250. Alderman Hibbert was not any more reasonable than the rest, for he claimed £21,686 as a warehousekeeper and only received £4,600.

The financing of the Corporation's canal enterprise and the compensation claims arising out of the establishment of the docks, necessitated total advances of £1,681,686 out of the Consolidated Fund.

It will be remembered that the West India Dock Act

provided that the fund for meeting the advances out of the Consolidated Fund should be repaid by means of additional rates on the shipping entering the Port, for fourteen years from August, 1799. Four years later the rates were pronounced to be inadequate for the purpose intended, and powers were given to increase the additional rates, and to charge them until the advances from the Consolidated Fund had been reimbursed with interest at 5 per cent.

The continuance of these charges on shipping far beyond the time originally contemplated, evoked complaints from shipowners, and the House of Commons referred the question to the Select Committee appointed to consider the means of maintaining and improving the foreign trade of the country. Reporting on the 18th June, 1824, the Committee submitted the following debtor and creditor account as between the public and the shipping interest :—

Advances from the Consolidated Fund	..	..	£	1,681,686
Deduct purchase of Legal Quays	..	..	..	486,087
				<hr/>
				1,195,599
Total gross receipts of Port Rates up to				
Jan. 5th, 1824	..	..	..	841,423
Deduct payments to Corporation for main-				
tenance of moorings, harbour masters'				
salaries, etc.	..	..	..	210,000
				<hr/>
				631,423
Leaving	..			
Paid into Consolidated Fund for lands sold				
in Isle of Dogs by the Corporation	..	..		13,981
				<hr/>
				645,404
Leaving balance to Consolidated Fund without				
reckoning interest	..	..	..	£550,195

The Committee expressed their view that the advances having been made, they must be borne by those for whose benefit and at whose solicitation the improvement of the Port was undertaken. The Committee would not accept the special argument of the shipowners using the docks, who contended that they derived no advantage from facilities in the river, pointing out that the advantage which such ships do derive from them was in the generally improved accommodation afforded to shipping and commerce of the Port by the formation of wet docks, etc., and







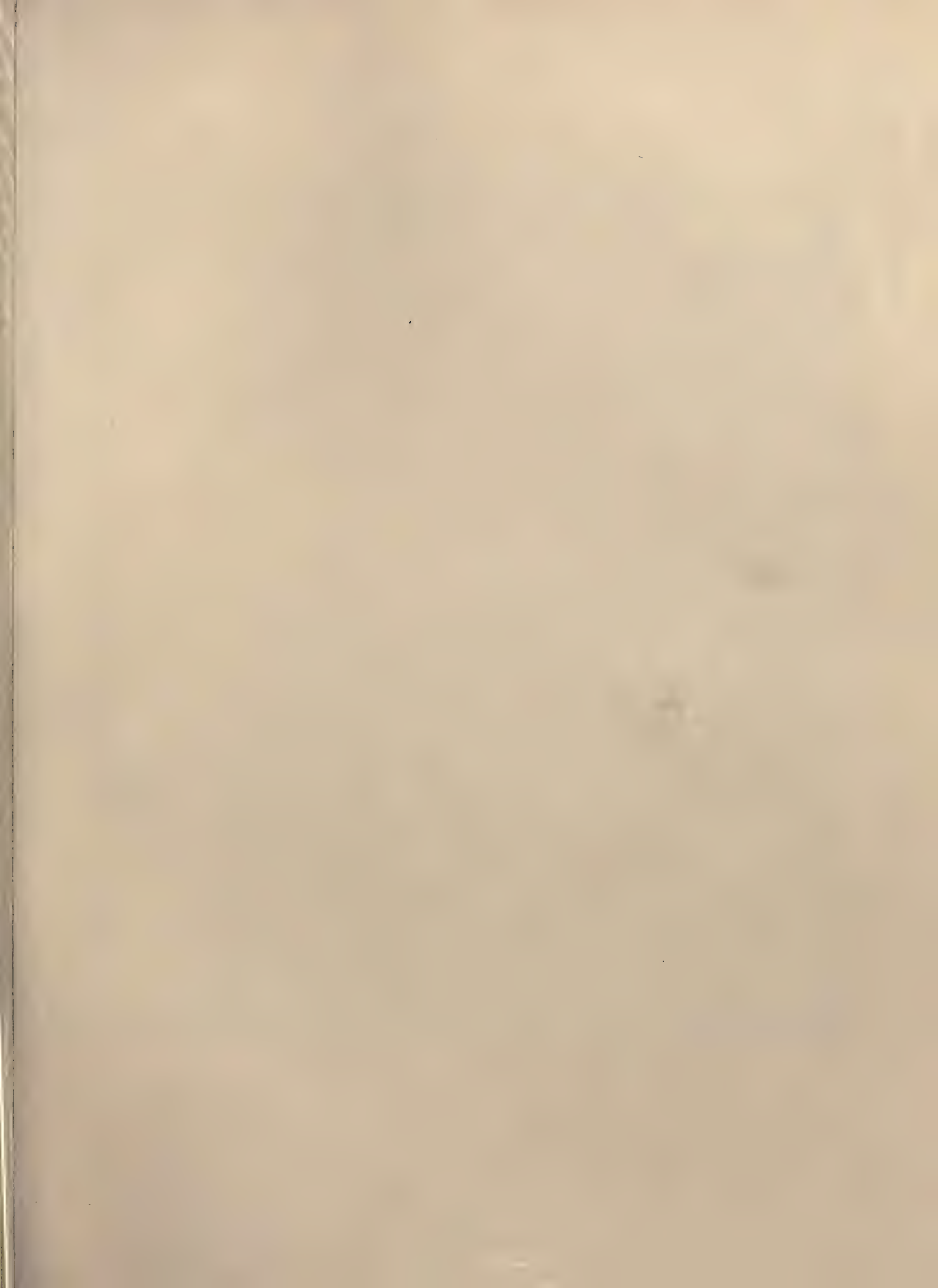


that those ships might at any time avail themselves of the mooring chains, should they prefer to use them instead of entering the docks. In expressing regret at their inability to recommend the abolition of the Port Dues on Shipping, the Committee observed that while they were neither insensible to their bearing upon the prosperity of the Port, the security of its trade, or the success of those measures by which it had been sought to render the country a general depository for the reception and transit of the merchandise of other nations, they believed the difficulty to have arisen from the excess of compensation awarded to particular interests, far beyond any computation that could have been formed. The Committee concluded with a noteworthy enunciation of the proper doctrine applicable to the development of ports by stating "That local improvements must be provided for by local sources, and that any proposition to relieve the shipping interests of London from the burthen to which they are subjected, for the improvement of the Port, would be to provide for the advantage of a particular port at the national expense. However important the interests of the Port of London may be, the same claim would, in point of justice, be equally applicable to every port of the United Kingdom, and it would be a manifest partiality to apply the public purse to the improvement of the Port of London, while every other port is left to bear the burden of its own improvements and to find the remuneration for them only through the increased advantages afforded to the mercantile interests connected with it."

The select Committee touched upon another question which was urgently put before them. The shipowners of London had complained for many years of the unreasonable cost of the supervising harbour staff employed by the Corporation, and it was alleged that the Navigation Committee and Port of London Committee, appointed by the Corporation to manage the Port, were not competent to carry out the duties, and moreover, that the duties could be well performed by one committee instead of being divided. An employee of the Port of London Committee, Captain Alex. Murray, the second harbourmaster, was bold enough, in giving his evidence, to attempt to disparage his masters by saying that his present chairman was a druggist, the previous one a hatter, and the one before him

an auctioneer. It was even hinted that two committees were formed in order to provide double fees. Other charges made were that a house at St. Katharines reserved for one of the harbourmasters, was being occupied by a clerk, and that the senior harbourmaster, long past work, was kept in position merely because there was no power to pension him. On these points of management the Committee passed several strictures and made recommendations, the drift of which was that all responsibility should be placed in the hands of the Navigation Committee.







THE COMMERCIAL D

*By the*





SHIPS AT ROTHERHITHE.

1877.

by Daniell.





## CHAPTER XIII

# The Surrey Dock System

THE nucleus of the existing system of docks on the south side of the river, now known as the Surrey Commercial Docks, was the Great Howland Wet Dock, referred to on page 67, and enlarged twenty years ago into the existing Greenland Dock. The system, which consists of nine docks, six timber ponds, and a canal three and a half miles long, extending to Peckham, originally formed the property of four companies. It is to this fact that the irregular and inconvenient congerie of docks and ponds is due. Each company built its accommodation as suited the requirements of its customers at the moment, without regard to the possibilities of extension or amalgamation. No worse case can be found of the results of competitive individual interests being allowed to cater for public requirements. It is difficult to understand how Parliament could have sanctioned Acts so peculiarly local and individualistic in their purpose. The effect has been that while the site of the Surrey Docks is one particularly suitable for the construction of docks, covering 300 acres, and situated only two miles from London Bridge, the reconstruction of the system would involve so much destruction of expensive works as to make the cost almost prohibitive.

The earliest of the four companies was the Surrey Canal Company. It originated with Mr. Ralph Dodd, an engineer, who propounded a scheme for a navigable canal from Rotherhithe to Deptford, Peckham, Camberwell, Walworth, Vauxhall, Clapham, Streatham, Mitcham, Croydon, Kingston, Ewell, and Epsom, with lateral cuts to towns in the vicinity. The principal idea was to utilize the low-lying grounds in the vicinity of the canal for cultivating market garden produce for the population of London, and to provide cheap access to the markets. The company was named the Grand Surrey Canal Company, and in May, 1801, obtained an Act of incorporation. The capital was fixed at £60,000, with power to borrow £30,000 more. Admiral Edwards was appointed chairman and Mr. Dodd

the engineer. At the end of March, 1802, a contract was entered into for the completion of two miles of the canal. Three months later, Mr. John Hall, a shipowner, submitted a plan for a basin for ships, with an entrance lock into the Thames at Rotherhithe. This was favourably entertained, but postponed, the commitments for the canal not having been discharged. A further section of the canal, from the Kent Road to Camberwell Road, was undertaken in March, 1803, and in the following month, the collateral branch to Peckham was decided on and the construction commenced. The directors hesitated to undertake the more serious work of attempting to provide dock accommodation in connexion with the canal, but were overborne by the proprietors. Their ambitions, fired by the great schemes which were going forward on the north side of the river, led them to desire to carry out a rival scheme on the south side, and at a special meeting called on their behalf in October, 1803, it was resolved "that the entrance basin and lock into the river at Warlters Wharf be carried into immediate effect as originally planned, the ship lock to be 140 feet in length." The first stone of the lock was laid by Sheriff Scholey on the 7th November, 1804. The Grand Surrey Basin, as it was called (now the basin leading into the Albion Dock), was a small basin of three acres, and was merely a widening of the canal. The first vessel to enter was the *Argo*, belonging to Mr. John Hall, to whose conception the new dock was due. The date was the 13th March, 1807. More capital became necessary to pay for the extended plans, and Acts were obtained in 1807 and 1808 authorizing a re-arrangement of capital and further powers, amongst them being the right to supply water to the districts mentioned above. In 1811 a further application to Parliament was made. It is evident that the financial situation had become difficult with the greater commitments. The canal was not yet completed, and power was sought to raise £150,000 more capital by new shares, promissory notes, mortgages, or annuities, partly to discharge debts and partly for a new collateral cut. The powers were granted, and in addition the company received authority to levy rates on vessels and goods. In 1825 a "Grand Ship Canal" was projected from London to Portsmouth, with a capital



of £5,000,000. It was to start from the Surrey Canal, and the prospectus stated that a line had been ascertained by which the Thames might be connected with Portsmouth Harbour by a tidal canal, without locks, and navigable by ships of the largest size, fully equipped and laden! The scheme never reached Parliament. Even the more modest pretensions of the original Surrey Canal had to be curtailed. The canal which was to have extended to Epsom never got further than Camberwell, where the terminus remains at this day. Other abortive schemes for making docks for colliers connected with this canal were projected between 1825 and 1855, when the company became incorporated under the name of the Grand Surrey Docks and Canal Company. All the old Acts were repealed, and powers were taken to make a fresh entrance into the Thames, enlarging some of the ponds and constructing new ones. From this Act it appears that the issued share capital was then £152,000, with loan capital of £150,000. Fresh capital in the form of preference stock to the extent of £199,000 was authorized by the Act. This additional capital was wanted for a new dock of sixteen acres, a basin of three acres, and a new lock, which were completed in July, 1860. The new dock was the dock now known as the Albion Dock. In 1864 the company was merged into the Surrey Commercial Dock Company, in circumstances to be detailed hereafter. In the later period of its sixty years' history it became a fairly prosperous venture, but for many years after its inception it was unremunerative to the proprietors. It paid no dividend till 1819, and then only 2 per cent. From 1820 to 1822, 3 per cent. was paid. Then it dropped back, and no dividend at all was paid during the period 1832 to 1846. From 1847 onwards the fortunes of the company gradually revived, until its absorption by the Surrey Commercial Dock Company in 1864, when it had earned 6 per cent. for the previous three years.

The second in order of date of the companies composing the Surrey Dock system was the Commercial Dock Company. This company was formed at a meeting held at the London Tavern on the 18th September, 1807. Alderman Sir Charles Price, Bart., M.P., was in the chair. At that meeting a scheme was submitted and agreed to for the incorporation of a statutory company, for purchasing

the Greenland Dock and the adjoining Norway Dock, with certain lands, under the title of Commercial Dock Company. The owner of the property was then Mr. William Ritchie, and the purchase price was £35,000. The scheme matured in the passing of an Act, in 1810, incorporating the company, authorizing it to raise new shares for £130,000 and to construct various works. The name of the Greenland Dock was at this time changed to the "Commercial Dock," the existing name being considered inappropriate, as the whale fishery trade had become insignificant and it was desired to attract the Baltic trade, which was expanding. The Act of 1810 indicates that the intention was to relieve the river of ships laden with timber, hemp, flax, pitch, and tar, and to secure for the cargoes the benefits of lower insurance rates against loss and pillage, offered by the northern docks. The company, however, was not allowed any more than the Surrey Canal Company had been, to have a monopoly of the trades for which their docks were designed.

Whilst this company was in course of being established, a third company—the Baltic Dock Company—was being formed in 1809 by Mr. Joseph Moore and others, who owned an estate of forty-five acres at Rotherhithe (comprising the present Lady Dock, part of Lavender and Acorn Ponds, Acorn Yard, and Russia Yard), with the object of converting the estate into ponds for storing and bonding timber. The Baltic Dock Company had obtained the consent of the Treasury to a preference in bonding timber and other wood goods, provided the charges did not exceed the customary charges. The Commercial Dock Company, realizing the disadvantage of the threatened competition, came to terms with Mr. Moore and his friends, and bought the greater part of the estate. With the estate the promise of the preference for bonding timber conferred by the Treasury was transferred to the Commercial Dock Company. In the result, however, that company did not obtain the anticipated privilege, but they were able to secure such a reputation in the handling of deals, boards, and staves, that in spite of competition of the other docks and private yards, the undertaking has retained the predominant share of this trade until the present time.

A fourth company received statutory recognition in 1811



as the owners of the East Country Dock. The construction of this dock had been started by a number of private persons in 1807, on a site to the south of the Greenland Dock, in order, as its name indicates, to accommodate the Baltic trade. The owners had not found themselves strong enough to complete the dock, and after the failure of negotiations to sell the premises to the Commercial Dock Company, they resorted to Parliament in order to obtain the prestige of statutory sanction as a means of obtaining the requisite capital. Under their Act of 1811 capital of £60,000 was authorized, with borrowing powers of £20,000. Again no monopoly of business was allowed, but it was stipulated, doubtless to emphasize the objection to the Treasury preference to the Baltic Dock scheme, that timber vessels might load in the docks. The preservation in the Act of the rights of the fellowship porters for the measurage and portorage of all coal, corn, grain, seed, salt, and fruit, indicates the anticipations of the directors as to the classes of business to be dealt with.

The East Country Dock remained as a separate entity until 1850, when it was purchased by the Commercial Dock Company for £40,000. The Act passed in 1851 to confirm the purchase, empowered the company to construct a new entrance to the Thames, now known as the South Entrance Lock, and to enlarge the East Country Dock into what is now the South Dock. The works cost £190,000, and were completed in 1855. The progress in the size of ships since the first docks were opened is shown by the fact that the first vessel to enter the South Dock was the *Oriental*, of 1,641 tons register.

Business at the Commercial Dock system became flourishing, and another new entrance—the Lavender Lock—was opened in 1862. The fortunes of the Commercial Dock Company fluctuated with the conditions of trade in the Port or of competition from other docks, but as a whole it was a successful undertaking. At the worst its dividend was never less than 3 per cent. in the long period of stagnation following upon the close of the Napoleonic wars. As trade recovered, the dividends earned gradually increased. In 1847 the dividend was 4 per cent. In 1852 it reached 5 per cent., till 1863, when it became 6 per cent. During this period the business which was attracted to the docks was chiefly soft

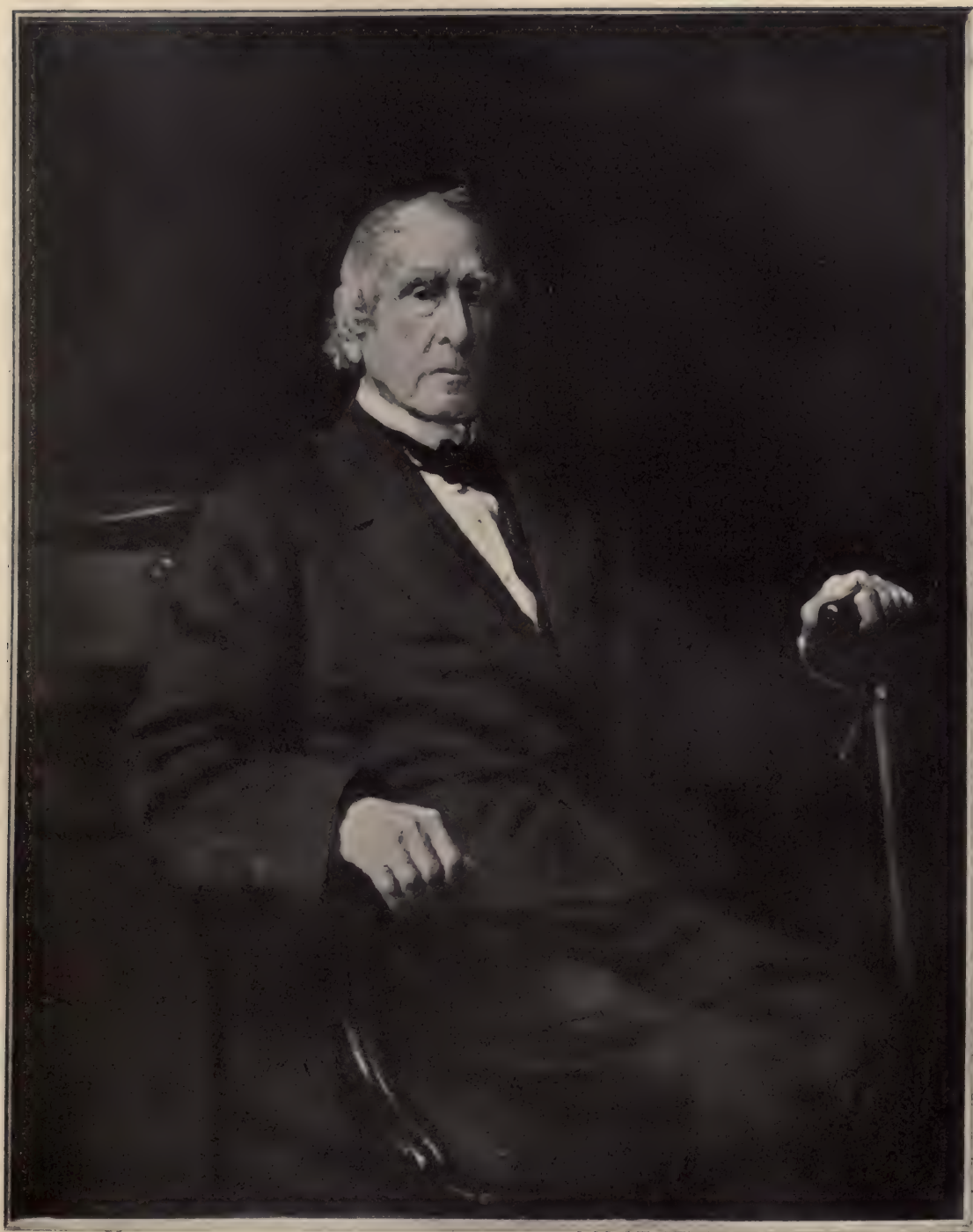
timber, that is, deals from the Scandinavian ports and the Baltic, and though many developments in late years have taken place at these docks, especially in the provision trades, soft timber is still the largest trade there. Several firms represented on the board of directors in the early days of the company were still represented in the list of directors when the dock undertakings were absorbed by the Port of London Authority. Amongst the firms is Churchill & Sim, the portrait of whose founder, Captain Alexander Mitchell Sim, is in the Board Room of the Authority, and is reproduced in this book. As a boy, Captain Sim followed the body of Nelson up the Thames when it was brought home for burial in December, 1805. After founding the firm of timber merchants of Churchill and Sim, he lived in the City of London, became a director of the Commercial Dock Company in 1847, and held the position until 1882, when he died, aged 94. Under his portrait are written, at his request, the following lines:—

The wind blew hard  
The sea was rough, far distant every joy  
When forced by fortune to embark  
I went a cabin boy.

From the above account it will be seen that by 1850 the four original companies had been reduced to two—the Grand Surrey Docks and Canal Company and the Commercial Dock Company—which had absorbed the Baltic and Eastland Dock Companies. A line drawn from the present Surrey Lock through the Stave Dock and the Russia Dock to the canal roughly represents the dividing line between the estates of the two companies—the Surrey Company owning the western side and the Commercial Company the eastern side.

In 1863 both of these companies were paying the same dividend of 6 per cent., but the competition and rivalry were becoming so great, that the Boards came to the conclusion that fusion was the only method of ensuring the maintenance of the dividend. Negotiations were accordingly entered into, and their issue, which was successful, was adopted by the proprietors of both companies, though some of the Surrey Canal Company's proprietors objected to the scheme of amalgamation as unfair to them. Parliamentary approval was obtained in





CAPTAIN ALEXANDER MITCHELL SIM

*From a painting by Holl, in possession of the Port of London Authority*





1864. The two companies were, as from the 1st January, 1865, incorporated into one under the name of the Surrey Commercial Dock Company. The capital of the new company was to consist of:—

Commercial Ordinary Stock	..	..	..	..	£ 551,851
Commercial Preference Stock	..	..	..	..	154,000
Surrey Ordinary Shares, with addition of £17 10s.	..			..	322,420
Surrey 1st Preference Shares	..	..	..	..	199,000
Surrey 2nd Preference Shares	..	..	..	..	49,000
					<hr/>
					£1,276,271

It will be observed that the new company started without any borrowed capital. The number of directors was fixed at twenty-five. Certain new works were authorized, and for this purpose the company received power to raise further capital.

The history of the operations of the new company is reserved for a later chapter.

## CHAPTER XIV

# Termination of the Privileges

THE ideas which fructified in the construction of the West India Docks achieved an instant success for both trader and investor. The shipowner found his ship discharged in three to four days as against a month. The merchant was from the first entry of the ship into Port protected as he had never been protected before. On the ships' arrival at Gravesend the hatches were secured by Customs' locks and not released till the ship entered the dock. Inside the dock premises plunder of cargo was checked by the regulation that no carts, carmen, or outside porters were admitted on to the quays. Outward vessels were not allowed to be contiguous to each other. No fires or candles were allowed to enter the Import Dock. The company had its own police establishment and labourers were searched on leaving work. All loose sugar was collected out of the holds of ships after discharge and sold for the benefit of the merchant. A statement made on behalf of the company asserted that the average loss of 71 lb. per hogshead of sugar while in the Port had been reduced to  $8\frac{3}{4}$  lb., whilst in the case of rum the reduction in loss had been from 4 gallons to  $\frac{1}{176}$ th of a gallon. It was claimed that in twenty years the saving to merchants had been £5,184,000 and to the revenue £3,339,000.

The proprietors of the company on their part had an excellent investment. The normal business carried on was stimulated by the conquests in the West Indies and by the accumulation of merchandise in London following upon the Continental wars. Five per cent. per annum had been paid to them during the construction of the docks. Then for a year and a half 7 per cent. per annum was paid, and for 1803 and after the opening ceremony onwards they received the maximum dividend of 10 per cent. besides spending freely out of revenue on new works and adding large sums to the reserve fund.

The following is a summary of the accounts of the company from July, 1799, up to February 1st, 1822 :—



# TERMINATION OF PRIVILEGES 139

Capital Stock .. .. .	£	1,200,000
Loan (repaid) .. .. .	30,000	
	<hr/>	
Purchase of lands .. .. .	£	1,230,000
Import dock and basin .. .. .	94,058	
Export dock .. .. .	309,894	
Warehouse, quays, roads .. .. .	205,056	
Wall .. .. .	557,106	
Other items .. .. .	26,603	
	<hr/>	
		1,222,290
	<hr/>	
Balance .. .. .		7,709
	<hr/>	
Interest during construction .. .. .		£34,526
	<hr/>	

	<i>Receipts.</i>	<i>Expenditure.</i>	<i>Balance.</i>
	£	£	£
1802-3 ..	153,272	71,734	81,538
1803-4 ..	153,863	71,686	82,176
1804-5 ..	180,762	81,252	99,510
1805-6 ..	205,728	91,817	113,911
1806-7 ..	246,688	111,746	134,935
1807-8 ..	271,347	130,614	140,733
1808-9 ..	330,623	132,998	197,625
1809-10 ..	330,252	156,037	174,215
1810-1 ..	297,929	163,154	134,775
1811-2 ..	449,421	186,297	263,124
1812-3 ..	465,720	273,533	192,187
1813-4 ..	469,739	254,793	214,946
1814-5 ..	336,684	209,495	127,189
1815-6 ..	357,171	171,842	185,329
1816-7 ..	297,539	179,617	117,922
1817-8 ..	299,043	259,193	39,850
1818-9 ..	248,769	161,644	87,125
1819-20 ..	340,000	140,986	199,014
1820-1 ..	314,669	160,512	154,157
1821-2 ..	230,330	164,568	65,762

The maximum sum required for the 10 per cent. dividend on the maximum capital stock in existence in these twenty years was £120,000.

The above expenditure included large sums for the construction of new warehouses and vaults in strictness chargeable to capital account. The total of this expenditure was estimated to be £600,000 in the twenty years. On the other hand, income was swollen by the increased value of funded property. The noticeable variations in the profits

shown in separate years is in part attributable to both these causes as well as to the fluctuations of business in war time. But in part also the variations are due to the fact that from time to time the company distributed by means of reductions in charges the reserves which had been accumulated. The policy of providing new works out of revenue and dividing reserve funds, qualified by occasional doles in the nature of reduced charges to pacify merchants, undoubtedly tended to the strengthening and maintaining of the company's finances, but it excited much criticism outside the company itself and eventually became the subject of fierce attacks when the question of renewing the privileges of the company came before Parliament.

The London Dock Company cannot in its earliest days of business be said to have fared badly, though its prosperity was less pronounced than that of the West India Dock Company. It suffered from having been capitalized at a figure far in excess of that of its rival, having regard to the extent of the accommodation obtained and its income possibilities. Not only had the original estimates of the cost of land and works proved to be far beyond the original estimates, but the trades appropriated to the docks were affected injuriously by the French wars. Brandy did not reach this country from France. The regular receipt of wines was affected by the disturbed condition in the Spanish Peninsula, though occasionally large consignments of port from Portugal were safely convoyed to London after the French navy had been driven from the seas. The West Indies were in our own hands and better protected because sugar was a food more necessary to the nation, and, moreover, rum was required for the navy. It is not surprising, therefore, to find that while the West India Dock Company in some years actually earned more than 20 per cent. (though paying only 10), the London Company never paid more than 6 per cent. before Waterloo, dropped to 3 per cent. during the three bad trade years of 1817 to 1819, and then only recovered to  $4\frac{1}{2}$  per cent. during the following years.

The third company operating under privileged conditions was more successful. During the first fifteen years of its career, dividends varying between 6 per cent. and 10 per cent. were earned by the East India Dock Company. It



must be remembered, however, that this dock was relatively small and that it was so much bound up with the great company for whose service it was founded that the financial results one way or the other were not of great concern to anyone. So long as it performed its part efficiently its purpose was served.

The period of twenty-one years' privilege accorded to the West India Dock Company expired on the 2nd September, 1823. The company applied to Parliament for a renewal of the privilege, and the petition was referred by the House of Commons to the Committee on Foreign Trade. The chairman of the committee was the Right Hon. Thomas Wallace, a member of the Government as Vice-President of the Council for the Management of Trade in 1820. He became Lord Wallace of Knaresdale in 1828.

The company presented a reasoned statement in support of their petition. One of the chief arguments employed by them was that of the great advantage of the system of classification of produce which had been introduced into the Port, and they pointed to the strong representations made by the committee of 1796 as to the objections to produce being stored in a number of warehouses under independent control where the standards of efficiency and the treatment of goods were different. They naturally laid stress on the immense benefits to traders, especially during the Great War, when the demands upon accommodation far exceeded what was anticipated when the docks were begun, and urged that it would be unfair to expose the company to open competition at a time when there was not trade enough to fill the warehouse space in the Port. They dwelt upon the security to traders and the public revenue gained by the administration of the docks being in the hands of a company which could afford to do its work well, and prophesied that with the renewal of an open market for the business, competition would not be restricted to the question of rates, but would take the form of a competition of irregular indulgences to traders which must be inimical to the public interest. With some sense of pride they pointed to the marked improvement in the character of the labourers employed at the West India Docks. As to the complaints on the subject of charges the company contended that they were comprehensive and were fair for the

services rendered, and they courted investigation and comparison with other ports. In response to the challenge regarding the large accumulation of funds they pointed out that they were still liable to erect further legal quays and to maintain them in future. This fund amounted on the 1st February, 1823, to £393,000, subject to some current liabilities not stated. To the complaint that by utilizing their large yearly balances for the provision of new works they were making the present generation pay for the benefit of posterity, the directors replied that the excess of expenditure was due to the demands of trade, and that as a set-off their customers had had the advantage of an expenditure of £1,800,000 while only finding a dividend of 10 per cent. on £1,200,000, and also reductions of rates during the previous four years. The most effective point they made in defence was that the whole of their business was a West India risk and that 10 per cent. on a business subject to many contingencies in those times was not unreasonable. They concluded by urging that if any new scheme of arrangement of business were a failure the admittedly existing satisfactory position of the merchant and revenue could never be restored.

Amongst the strongest opponents of the renewal of the privileges was the London Dock Company, whose own privileges lapsed three years later. The contention of the directors of the London Dock Company is not so inexplicable as it first seems, though it subsequently had effects not foreseen while they were in pursuit of the prize which they thought they perceived immediately before them. The London Company saw that the West India Company had sometimes earned as much as 20 per cent. and that if earnings were now lower it was because large voluntary reductions in charges had been made. They themselves in their best days had not earned more than 6 per cent. and had now descended to a 3 per cent. level. Between the expiry of their rivals' privileges and the expiry of their own they imagined they would have all the advantages of protection for their own business whilst free to attack that of their rivals, and that during this interval they could attract sufficient of the lucrative West India trade to re-establish their position. Mixed with these motives, there was as the subsequent proceedings showed, some amount of personal



feeling that had accompanied and survived the secession of the West India group of merchants from the general body of merchants responsible for the first dock scheme at Wapping.

The fact which the London directors overlooked was that the West India Docks paid better, not so much because the rates charged there were more remunerative, but because the undertaking had been far more cheaply constructed. The ultimate outcome of the doctrine of free trade which they preached, but did not foresee the end, was that it might equally be utilized by promoters of dock systems yet unborn.

The investigation of the committee on foreign trade spread over a period of ten weeks with very frequent sittings; indeed, the inquiry was a longer one than that of the 1796 committee. Much of the old familiar ground was traversed in order to prove the improvement of the new order of things as compared with the old. But the wharfingers having been disposed of by purchase or compensation, were not present to defend the old order, and the City, being identified with the West India Dock system, were also away. The opposition to renewals of the privileges found its form chiefly in a duel between the two rival companies.

Several representatives of the Customs and Excise appeared at the inquiry to testify that the establishment of the West India Docks had entirely stopped the plundering of cargoes, and contrasted that system favourably with the London Docks, one witness alleging that the dedication of one dock system to one trade offered better security to the revenue than several docks for the promiscuous reception of trade. Several of the directors of the West India Company came before the committee, including Mr. Hibbert. Their chief object was to convince the committee that their interest in the company was much more that of merchant than shareholder, and pointing out that except the five representatives of the City, the whole of the twenty-one directors were West India merchants. Mr. Hibbert said that the London Docks could not be constructed till a monopoly was given to them, but he weakened his case by the opinion that he did not think the monopoly was necessary to maintain a dividend of 10 per cent. He relied on the

merits of concentrating the trade at one dock. Another witness considered that it was a monopoly in favour of the West India merchants who would be injured if the accommodation could be devoted to other objects, but he thought that the bargain of 1799 should not be a permanent one and that 7 per cent. should be the maximum dividend. Mr. Drinkald, a shipowner, lighterman, and wharfinger, considered that work was done better at the West India Dock than at the London Dock and that they were more honest.

Evidence was given by Mr. Domett, stated by the committee to be a shipowner of reputation, showing that vessels of 400 tons were saving £102 in charges per voyage by having exchanged the river for the West India Dock. Several of the witnesses testified to the shallowness and inadequacy of the channels above Limehouse for the larger vessels in the West India trade as a reason for confining that trade to the Isle of Dogs system. An important witness in the West India trade, Mr. C. N. Pallmer, a West India planter and the acting chairman of the West India Committee, criticized dock charges as too high, and objected to the expenditure of £12,314 towards a volunteer regiment and £1,000 on a naval school at Poplar. The remedy he submitted on behalf of the planters was to continue the privileges for seven years, but to lower the maximum schedule of charges to the reduced charges then in operation, with a reduction in the maximum dividend—to reduce the surplus funds by remission of rates to the extent of £50,000 annually and to defray the cost of repairs and additional works out of such funds until there was a reserve of only £50,000 left. The inspiration of the opposition was revealed when Mr. J. Inglis, the chairman of the London Company, came before the committee. He accused the West India directors of having seceded from the band of the original promoters of Docks because they could not obtain the management. The secession had spoiled the original conception by narrowing the plans of the Wapping scheme, but those who executed that scheme had always contemplated the possibility of accommodating the West India trade and anticipated competition on the expiry of the privileges. He countered Mr. Hibbert's statement by saying that the London Dock monopoly had not been solicited by the promoters, but given by the Treasury





EAST INDIA HOUSE, 1799





for the protection of the revenue. An officer of the London Dock, Mr. Dennis Chapman, supported his chairman and in the course of his evidence gave some information as to the business carried on at the London Dock. He said that they had had 212 ships at one time. There was cellarage for 57,000 pipes of wine and warehouse space for 24,000 hogsheads of tobacco. One thousand to 1,200 labourers were employed. Shipowners had the option of discharging their vessels by crew or by the dock labourers. This option regarded by Mr. Chapman, as a merit, was deemed by the West India interest to be a defect, who pointed out that at the West India Dock no one but the labourers of the company were allowed to perform operations, and it was claimed that the better out-turn of cargoes was due to this fact. The London Company were supported by the Commercial Dock Company. Their own anticipations of a timber monopoly had been disappointed, and they were looking to the West India trade for possible compensation. The opposition were able as well as the West India Company to obtain Customs' evidence on their side, and there was also merchants' support. Mr. Tooke, a Russian merchant, complained of exorbitant charges driving away trade, a familiar phrase in all dock history, but he had to apologize for an unfortunate illustration which he had selected. The best answer to this complaint was a statement produced by Mr. Henry Longlands, the secretary of the company, in which it was stated that charges and rent had been reduced by the following percentages since the opening of the docks, viz. :—

				<i>Rates.</i>	<i>Rent.</i>
Sugar	..	..	..	22%	20%
Coffee and cocoa	..	..	..	10%	16 $\frac{3}{4}$ %
Rum	..	..	..	10%	57%
Dry wood	..	..	..	20%	33 $\frac{1}{3}$ %

It must be remembered that the original charges were those in force at the legal quays at the time the docks were opened.

Some particulars relating to the directors and the staff came out in the course of the inquiry. The directors received £150 a year each, a rate of remuneration which persisted until the company was extinguished at the end of 1900. The chairman and deputy chairman received £200 a

year each. There were three meetings a week, and the chairman and deputy chairman gave some attendance every day. Such salaries could hardly be brought in aid of the theory that the directors were sacrificing the trade to the interests of the company. The best paid officer at the docks was the Dockmaster, a title which changed its meaning in later years. To-day the title is given to the official who is responsible for the docking and berthing of vessels ; then it meant the official who is now called the Superintendent of the Dock, and it may be noted that the Dockmaster of the earlier days, when there was only one dock to one company, was as important, if not a more important person than the Secretary, who was usually a much better educated man, but regarded more as a clerk to record the decisions of the Board than as responsible for management. Mr. Strover, the dockmaster in question, received £630 a year and a bonus. Mr. Longlands, the secretary, had £700. There were 29 heads of departments, officers, and clerks with more than £200 per annum ; 243 officers of an inferior class, 223 coopers, samplers, and labourers permanently employed, and a host of extra labourers varying with the very irregular demands of work.

The East India Dock Company, whose privileges ceased in 1807, did not appear at the inquiry. The reason is clear. The company being a subsidiary one of the East India Company, the main part of its traffic was secure without a statutory monopoly, and the directors probably sympathized with the opponents of renewal for the same reason as prompted the action of the London Company.

By the time the committee had ceased taking evidence the Parliamentary year had so advanced that they decided on the 10th July that no further proceedings should be taken during the session. At that meeting they had before them the answer of the Dock Directors to the offer of the Planters made through Mr. Pallmer. The answer was that :

1. They saw no objection to a renewal for seven years.
2. They accepted the suggestion that the existing rates should be considered as maximum rates with some slight modification.
3. They declined to agree to a lowering of the maximum dividend, representing that many proprietors had bought their stock at the high current prices.
4. They offered no serious objection to the principle of gradually



dissipating the Reserve Fund by lowering rates and by applying it to repairs or new works, but stipulated that no smaller sum than £100,000 should be left in that fund.

5. They accepted the principle of the suggestion of the Planters that a simple and effectual remedy should be provided for giving the West India merchants redress both at law and equity in the event of any misapplication of the funds of the company or upon any grounds of complaint where such remedy is not provided under the existing Act.

6. The directors finally stipulated that whatever rights might be interfered with as the consideration for an extension of their privileges, must remain unprejudiced at the expiration of the period of extension.

The Committee did not make their report to the House of Commons until the 3rd June, 1823, two months before the privileges were due to expire. The Committee reported that the maintenance and encouragement of the dock establishments were objects of equal interest to all parties concerned in the commerce of the country, and that the principal question appeared to be whether the advantages confessedly resulting from them could be preserved to the public most effectually under a system of exclusive privilege granted to each dock respectively, by which the trade should be by law divided and apportioned ; or one of competition operating freely amongst them in which the convenience of commerce, whether arising from local position, regulation or charges, should be alone the measure of employment and advantages enjoyed by each several establishment. The advantage to the public of open competition wherever applicable, would not, as a general principle, be questioned, but it could not be adopted without limitation, or to be presumed that various cases might not present themselves in which a departure from that principle might not be of such importance to the public interests as to be fully warranted by every consideration of prudence and expediency. This was the case in the original establishment of the docks, when it was necessary to hold out liberal compensation to those who invested their capital in a speculation which, whatever advantage it might promise to the adventurous and the public, was in its commencement of doubtful success. But it appeared to the Committee that it belonged to the parties soliciting exclusive privileges to show that so strong an especial case existed in the

particular instance as to offer advantage sufficient to preponderate against the generally recognized beneficial principle of competition. In the present case, all the claims that arise from the hazard of doubtful experiment which originally recommended the grant of exclusive privilege had long vanished. The success of the experiment had been decisively ascertained, the investment of capital had been fully compensated, and the advantages of docks were universally acknowledged. Both from the evidence they had received and from their personal observation, the Committee were satisfied that no establishment of its kind could surpass the security afforded to the collection of the revenue, the protection to the property of the merchant and the facility to the conduct of his business, but the Committee had directed its attention to ascertain how far the very strict measures of precaution adopted by the company were necessary to the chief practical purposes of the dock establishment, and whether the effect of the system of exclusion and separation which was said alone to admit of these precautions, so much exceeded in value to the public interests the more open system prevailing in other docks as to call for its preservation if it involved the continuance of a general system of exclusive protection. The Committee gave credit to the directors that they were not actuated by feelings of pecuniary interest, that their interests were as planters or merchants infinitely superior to any they could have as dock directors, and that they were influenced only by their impression of the utility and advantage of their establishment, increased perhaps by a solicitude for the preservation of that which they had, with great care and attention, fostered and brought nearly to perfection. The particular advantage which could alone warrant a departure from the principle of open competition could in this case only be shown in the inseparable connexion of those privileges with the security of the collection of the public revenue and the property of the Merchant. That such advantage was not to be found alone in the exclusive system of the West India Dock Company, the result of the testimony received by the Committee appeared clearly to establish. Whatever merits might belong to the system of the West India Docks in other respects, the Committee felt that they were insufficient to warrant them



in recommending a continuance of an unnecessary compulsion upon one branch of commerce which might involve in it a similar compulsion upon others, and ultimately lead to a general system of restriction and monopoly.

There were two matters upon which stress had been laid by the dock company: one, the classification of the several articles of merchandise at one establishment as facilitating the operations of the merchant and the duties of the revenue; and, the other, the removal of the crews from the ships as the best security against depredation and as conducing also to dispatch in unloading cargoes. In respect of the first, the Committee found that classification was effected in the London docks sufficiently for those purposes for which it was alone important, and would therefore be applicable to any establishment of a similar nature. In respect of the second, the Committee entertained considerable doubt as to whether the discharge of a ship was performed with greater promptitude by hired labourers under the inspection of the dock officer or by seamen under their own officers, nor did the Committee believe that the continuance of the crews on board led to habitual depredation. The Committee did not share the fear as to an open competition of indulgencies, relying upon the character of those to whom the management of each establishment was interested, and the consideration that the interests of the dock were bound up with the interests of the public.

The Committee then dealt with the question of the accumulation of £393,000 referred to above, and confessed that this question had been a difficult one to decide. The original Act had provided that the funds of the company should be utilized in the following order:—

1. Half share of the costs of the Act.
2. Purchase money of lands.
3. Interest on borrowed money.
4. Dividends on stock during construction.
5. Compensations specified in the Act.
6. Making and completing the docks, management and maintenance of the undertaking, and extensions and improvements.
7. Repayment of monies borrowed.
8. Reductions of rates so far as it could be done with prudence and safety.

The Committee pointed out that the accumulation of the surplus fund (equal to 30 per cent. of the capital), and the

mode in which it had taken place had been adduced as a proof of the extravagance of the rates exacted by the company. On the other hand, the company explained that it had arisen from an accession of importations much beyond any calculation previously formed, and due to political circumstances, and that had the rates been confined to the produce of the Colonies which could alone be calculated upon, the surplus would not have exceeded the sum of £36,000, a sum less than necessary to provide for contingencies. While recognizing that some abatement of rates had already been made, the Committee took the view that the company had not fully discharged their obligations in regard to the surplus, and had not satisfactorily explained their tactics in this respect, and they therefore advised that the company should be called upon to relieve the trade by further reductions, recommending that the scheme already referred to put forward by the directors should be approved by Parliament as best calculated to meet the public interest, to remedy the error into which the company had fallen in the accumulation of such a surplus, and to provide against the inconveniences any other application might occasion. The Committee felt that the reduction of the surplus should take place within the limited period assigned, and that this was rendered necessary by the situation in which the other docks would be placed on the expiration of their respective charters. In their original determination to recommend no renewal of the privileges, the Committee had in view the establishment of a general competition among the dock establishments on one date. In such a competition the power of applying such a large sum to the reduction of rates below the profitable point would have enabled the West India Company to cast the balance of the competition in its own favour. On the other hand, the West India Company would have the disadvantage, before the expiry of the privileges of the other companies, of meeting a competition with those who were in possession of exclusive privileges. To avoid this evident disadvantage, the Committee had considered whether it might be expedient to extend the exclusive privilege of the West India Docks to the date upon which the London Company's privileges expired, unless the London Company were prepared to anticipate such expiry and surrender their powers. It therefore



appeared to the Committee that the reduction of rates at the expense of the surplus funds would practically counter-balance any advantage temporarily enjoyed by the London Company. The Committee pointed out that competition could be in complete and undisturbed operation by the year 1827, when all the Acts conveying exclusive privileges would have expired. As the final step necessary to secure the benefits of free competition, they recommended that the Treasury should recall the various orders and warrants confining the landing or bonding of particular articles to particular docks or places, and allow them to be landed and bonded wherever a sufficient security could be afforded to the revenue and to the property of the merchant. In a final paragraph the Committee said they had the less reluctance in coming to their conclusions because, although the system of the West India Docks must necessarily undergo some alteration if the report were adopted, yet there was reason to believe that the interests of the company would incur no hazard, and that from the character, regulation, situation and other advantages possessed by their docks, they would at all time be sure of commanding that proportion of the commerce of the country to which they were justly entitled.

Reviewing the Committee's decision in the light of events, it cannot but be felt that whilst the principle of a perpetual monopoly in private hands could not be defended, a golden opportunity was lost of consolidating the dock interests into the hands of one body and working the docks for the public benefit. The probable explanation is that the connexion of the Corporation of London with the administration of the Port had not inspired confidence in its capacity to manage a greater undertaking, whilst the idea of a public trust such as took over the Liverpool Docks from the municipality in 1858 had not yet germinated.

The fate of the company's application hardly calls for sympathy. As the Committee pointed out, the pledge of the public had been redeemed, and the company had received all they contracted for. From the first the policy of the company had been a West India policy, dictated by purely commercial and selfish, and not by national considerations. The outstanding feature of that policy, which overbore all the merits of most efficient management and led to the

severest criticism by traders and public alike, was the employment of the surplus revenue in new works and the accumulation of a huge reserve fund, the latter a fighting fund, as the Government Committee clearly perceived. The monies so dealt with amounted in all to a sum not far short of the entire capital of the company. The high charges which enabled the company to hoard these resources in twenty years, ultimately fell not upon the merchant, but upon the consumer. The chief consumers in 1822, the working classes, were not in the same mood or as powerless as they were in 1799. The French wars had left the country generally in a parlous state. Trade was stagnant. Harvests had been bad, and grave discontent prevailed both with material and political conditions, culminating into riots and outrages in many places. The agitation for Roman Catholic emancipation had begun, stirring the unthinking classes into an interest in reform never before felt. Factory legislation was being passed to meet one of the deepest grievances of the time, and in 1826 some measure of relief to the consumer was gained by a modification of the Corn Laws. The advent of a great personality to high office in the State doubtless had weight in the decision come to. Peel joined the Ministry in January, 1822, as Home Secretary, following upon distinction gained as the chairman of a Committee on currency questions. The direction in which his political development eventually led him is a commonplace of commercial history, and it is not straining imagination to believe that his powerful influence was applied to the negating of such an application as the West India Dock Company. Whether he was responsible for the almost strident note of the Committee in praise of the doctrine of an unlimited competition applied to the dock situation it is not profitable to inquire. It is to be hoped not, and it is to be regretted that the Committee could perceive no other alternatives of serving the public in the Port than those of either having a close corporation of trade interests, or opposing bodies pledged from the first to use the Port as an arena for fighting merely for their own hand.







ST. KATHARINE BY THE TOWER. 1780

From a print in the British Museum



## CHAPTER XV

### St. Katharine Dock Company

THE desire of the Committee on Foreign Trade expressed in the recommendation recorded in the last chapter, that the Port should have open competition of docks was soon to be gratified to its fullest extent. In the session of 1824 a Bill was promoted for the construction of a new dock on the north side of the river between the London Dock and the Tower of London. The site chosen was a much smaller one than that dedicated to the London Dock and was even more expensive, as the twenty-three acres of land required had on it the old foundation of St. Katharine Hospital, a brewery, some 1,100 houses, and an artificial creek called the St. Katharine Dock, which was a private landing place for the hospital. The hospital of St. Katharine was founded by Matilda, the Queen of King Stephen, by licence of the priory and convent of the Holy Trinity in London, on whose grounds the hospital was built. Matilda dedicated the hospital to the memory of two of her children who died in infancy. Queen Philippa, wife of Edward III, founded a chantry there. The church, as the picture shows, was not a large or important one, but Stow speaks of the singing of the choir as being not much inferior to that of St. Paul's. It was a memorial of more than local interest as it was the personal property of the Queen of England, and as such escaped the fate of the monastic establishments when Henry VIII carried out his ruthless policy of confiscation. To the stern Protestant it long remained suspect because of the maintenance of an establishment of lay brothers and sisters, and when the Gordon Riots exposed London in 1780 to the mercy of a few fanatics leading bands of thieves, the St. Katharine Hospital was only saved from the flames by the efforts of certain loyal citizens who volunteered to defend the Queen's property from the violence of the mob. The sentimental interest of the public in the St. Katharine Hospital was employed for all it was worth by the opponents of the new dock scheme, and the journals of the day with copious

quantities of tracts, were used for the purposes of propaganda against the dock scheme in a way that suggests an intelligent anticipation of the modern machinery of agitation by vested interests. In particular, one tract was issued by "A Clergyman," in which resort was made to the intensest form of clerical eloquence. He maintained that on every principle of propriety and decency the pre-occupancy of the soil by St. Katharine Church for seven centuries ought to operate as a barrier against all secular intrusion and direct the steps of the dock company elsewhere. He urged that the rite of consecration had ever been esteemed an inviolable and perpetual separation to sacred uses, and that the members of the Established Church had been consoled for the slowness with which their structures rose in comparison with those of dissenters, by the certainty that when once reared they were reared, so far as human prudence could devise, for the remotest earthly duration, that their children's children in long succession should worship the God of their fathers, that in those hallowed precincts they might lay their dust secure from indignity, and surrounded by their kindred, and the professors of a common faith, await in peace the consummation of all things. The guns of the opposition were, however, silenced on this question by the trustees for the St. Katharine foundation coming to terms with the promoters of the new dock. The exchange of new residences for the brothers near the new Regent's Park in place of the ancient quarters near the river was too attractive to be resisted. The houses which closely surrounded the hospital were of the lowest class. Stow remarks that they were small "tenements and homely cottages having inhabitants, English and strangers, more in number than in some city in England." Yet some of the houses only occupied 100 superficial feet, and the character of the neighbourhood may be gathered from the names of such thoroughfares as Dark Entry, Cat's Hole, Shovel Alley, Rookery, Pillory Lane, etc. If the promoters of the new company were to be condemned for the destruction of an historical edifice, they were entitled to claim that their operations also involved the disappearance of the most insanitary and unsalutary dwellings in London.

The scheme adopted was for the making of a basin of  $1\frac{1}{2}$  acres leading into two docks of about 4 acres each, surrounded



by high warehouses, built up to the water's edge. This last feature was a departure from the plan followed both at the West India and London Docks. At those docks, the warehouses were set back some 50 or 60 ft. from the water's edge, with a road and a narrow transit shed between the warehouses and the water, the object being to secure a place for the preliminary sorting of the goods before housing in the warehouse floor. The idea in the St. Katharine Dock scheme was to save the labour used in the transit operation by getting the goods from the ship direct on to the housing floor. Where cargoes are all of the same character and have to be housed at one warehouse this idea works satisfactorily, but if it is otherwise, the sorting has still to be performed on the warehouse floor instead of in the transit shed with distribution afterwards at a higher cost. The design of the St. Katharine Dock in this respect has never been copied at any of the Thames docks since. Though designed twenty-six years after the West India Docks, the measurements of the locks allowed the entry of ships of no larger size than those coming to the Port in 1799. The St. Katharine Dock scheme of 1824 is the St. Katharine Dock of 1920, and the largest vessel which can enter on the most favourable tides cannot exceed 1,000 tons net register. This fact indicates that for several years after steam vessels had made their appearance the future possibilities of steam merchant vessels had not been appreciated. But one explanation of this policy may be found in the intention of the promoters to cater for the warehousing business rather than for the shipping business. In this respect their plans provided for adequate accommodation and facilities both for the then existing business and future business.

Amongst names long after familiar in London commerce associated with the scheme were Sir J. W. Lubbock, Sir C. Burrell, Sir E. Carr Glyn, Mr. Pascoe Grenfell, Mr. John Hubbard, and Mr. James Freshfield. Subscribers to the extent of £1,089,600 had been found before the application to Parliament was made. There is some evidence that the scheme was at first not without the support of the West India interest, as it provided warehouse accommodation very near town and in this way remedied the only weakness of the West India Dock system in being three miles from London. Possibly, too, the

opportunity of reprisals against the London Company in their own territory may have been a factor in their sympathetic attitude towards the scheme. The new scheme chiefly threatened the London Company, and even if any future struggle should to some extent involve the West India Docks it was some satisfaction to the directors of that company to find the doctrine of free trade so soon applied against its advocates. As the London Company were the leading opponents of the renewal of the privileges in 1823 they occupied the same position in relation to the St. Katharine Dock Bill. It was a sarcastic comment on the opposition, that the preamble of the Bill commenced with the doctrine enunciated by the London Company so successfully in 1823, viz., that it was expedient to make additional docks as near as may be to the city and to establish them on the principle of free competition in trade and without any exclusive privileges or immunities. The Bill was opposed in the Commons on second reading, which was carried by seventy-four votes against fifty-five. It was not allowed to proceed in the 1824 session owing to non-compliance with Standing Orders, but evidence was taken by a Commons committee. In May, 1825, the Bill came before a committee of the House of Lords, with Lord Torrington as chairman. The leading witness for the Bill was Mr. John Hall (later Sir John Hall), the same shipowner who had urged dock making on the Surrey Canal Company in 1802, and who was intended to be the secretary of the new company. The case made out for a new dock was mainly one of increased trade in the Port. Information was given as to the progress of commerce in the Port. The number of ships had grown from 13,949 in 1794 to 20,685 in 1822, and 23,618 in 1824. The number of ships mooring in the river had grown from 8,001 in 1808 to 15,913 in 1824, so that though there had been a large transfer of shipping from the river into the docks so soon as they were made, there were nearly 2,000 more ships in the river in 1824 than before the dock question was even considered by Parliament. In weighing this statement it must be borne in mind that the river vessels in 1824 were practically all colliers whose operations were more simple than those of the Colonial vessels transferred into the docks. A point of interest in Mr. Hall's statement is that whilst in 1808 no steam boats entered the Thames;



945 voyages by steam boats were recorded in 1823. The position had been aggravated by the sites of some of the legal quays having been occupied by the new Custom House. He anticipated too, that on the expiry of the East India Dock privileges in 1827 the private Indiamen would want to come to docks nearer London and to escape the high dock charges there. A further reason given for new docks being needed was the crowded state of the London Dock quays owing to the vaults not being able to contain all the wines and spirits imported, there sometimes being 4,000 to 5,000 casks waiting on the quays for housing there. Unfavourable comments on the high charges in force were also made by Mr. Hall, and he urged that such reductions as were made in 1824 had only been prompted by the appearance of the St. Katharine Dock Bill. The second witness was Captain Compton, who was dockmaster-designate of the new dock. His evidence ran on the same lines and the case was confirmed by a series of witnesses consisting of a Lloyds surveyor, a pilot, wine and spirit brokers, and a few merchants who hoped to profit by the competition to be set up. It was the turn of the London Company to be on the defensive, and their experience was unfortunate. They were represented by their secretary, Mr. Simon Cock, who had only been appointed five months before. His case was that the London Docks were not fully utilized. He produced a statement to show that on a certain day, a month before, the London Docks had only 11,897 tons of shipping in the dock while there was room for 75,000 tons, and only 143,056 tons of goods in warehouses and vaults large enough to hold 232,220 tons. There was a palpable error in the returns, and Mr. Cock had to admit that they had been prepared for him at the docks, and that he had not looked at them. This discounted the value of his evidence, as did also the production of a letter from his predecessor written twelve months before, apologizing for the warehousing of brandy on a warehouse floor because there was no room in the vaults. Dealing with Mr. Hall's evidence as to the increase in the number of vessels into the Port, Mr. Cock affirmed that the great proportion of the increase was in colliers, coasters, fishing vessels and small foreign traders, none of which required dock accommodation. Mr. Cock's strongest claim for the throwing out of the Bill was that

the London Company had in the previous October commenced to build a new dock to the east of their main dock (the present eastern dock), which they hoped to complete by April, 1827, at a cost of £300,000.

The other witnesses for the London Company, including pilots and lightermen, said that the remedy of the new dock for clearing the river was an illusory one, as in order to leave space for manœuvring traffic into the St. Katharine Dock the moorings opposite the entrance would have to be abolished, and vessels provided for by new moorings elsewhere, leading to further crowding. Mr. Biggs, a surveyor, was called to criticize the estimate of cost of the new works. He said the cost of the site would work out at £68,700 per acre. There were forty-nine houses with 303 persons per acre, and he put the cost of the work at £1,873,000, against the promoters' £1,580,000.

Though the West India Dock Company did not petition against the Bill, they allowed their secretary, Mr. Longlands, to give evidence. He said that though the privileges of his company had expired for nearly two years only two West India vessels had preferred the London Dock, and he did not think a new dock was wanted either to relieve the river or reduce charges. He did not entertain the proposition that the more docks the more commerce for the Port and the only effect of the St. Katharine Dock would be to withdraw traffic from the London Dock. He had the most serious apprehensions as to the calamitous effects of a fire at the dock as, if it were crowded with shipping, he could not conceive how a ship on fire could be removed from other ships in such a dock, confined as it was, without the danger of the whole being destroyed. His apprehensions have not been verified by events, and with very few vessels likely to use the dock in future are not now likely to be verified.

One of the arguments used by Mr. Longlands was the waste of public money which would ensue upon the unnecessary Customs and Excise establishments. Statements were put in showing that the then existing establishments at the docks on an average of three previous years cost as follows :—

		<i>Customs.</i>	<i>Excise.</i>	<i>Total.</i>
East India Dock ..	..	£10,306	£5,329	£15,635
West India Dock ..	..	16,922	14,886	31,808



# ST. KATHARINE DOCK COMPANY 159

		<i>Customs</i>	<i>Excise</i>	<i>Total</i>
London Dock	.. ..	26,803	21,306	48,109
		<u>£54,031</u>	<u>£41,521</u>	<u>£95,552</u>

One of the petitioners was Mr. Mark Brown, a wharfinger, interested in Mark Brown's Wharf, Davis's Wharf and other wharves comprised in the Potters Field property, Southwark, worth £100,000, opposite the entrance to the proposed dock. He was represented by two of his staff, who testified to the ability of these wharves to deal with cargoes of vessels likely to use the St. Katharine Dock, alleging that their accommodation was not being fully utilized, the warehouses only having one half of their storage room occupied. After hearing the evidence and speeches from counsel the committee determined that the preamble of the Bill was proved, and the Bill received the Royal Assent on the 10th June, 1825, without amendment.

The Act stated that the sum of £1,352,752, the estimated cost of the new dock, should be considered to be the capital stock of the company, and that the whole of this sum should be subscribed before any of the powers of the Act should be put in force. £1,089,000 had been already subscribed. This left only £263,152 to raise. Power was given to raise a further £500,000 either by capital stock or by borrowing or partly by one way and partly by the other. The following were appointed the first directors of the company :—

THOMAS TOOKE  
 GEORGE GERARD DE H. LARPENT  
 SIR JOHN WILLIAM LUBBOCK, BART.  
 JAMES ALEXANDER  
 JOHN WILLIAM BUCKLE  
 WILLIAM CRAWFORD  
 GEORGE CARR GLYNN  
 WILLIAM HALDIMAND  
 JOHN BENJAMIN HEATH  
 JOHN HODGSON  
 JOHN HORSLEY PALMER  
 HENRY ROWLES  
 WILLIAM SAMPSON  
 WILLIAM THOMPSON  
 ANDREW HENRY THOMPSON  
 THOMAS WILSON  
 FLETCHER WILSON.

The maximum number of directors was fixed at twenty-one. The rates to be charged on shipping were limited to those in force at other docks protected by walls, and on goods the rates were to be those which were in operation in the Port generally. No representative of the City was entitled to a seat on the board, and there was no revival of the regulation in the first West India Dock for the regular disappearance of each director for one year out of five ; otherwise the constitution and regulation of the affairs of the company and the conduct of business at the docks were based upon the precedents of the West India and London Companies. Of course, no monopoly of trade was given to the company. A curious contrast with modern legislation of its kind is to be observed. The Act states that owing to the removal of the Collegiate church and hospital the few remaining inhabitants of the precincts of St. Katharine would no longer have the benefit of the religious offices, rites and ceremonies administered by the brethren of the hospital, and it was therefore enacted that these inhabitants should be able to require the same privileges from the perpetual curate of St. Botolph Without, Aldgate, in consideration of which the company was to pay £50 a year annually to the curate. While these spiritual matters were provided for, none of the modern obligations was placed upon the company to find housing accommodation for the poor inhabitants of the 1,100 houses which were to be destroyed in constructing the new works. While clause after clause was inserted for the protection of landlords and lessees the weekly tenants had to shift for themselves. Amongst the rights specially preserved were those of the King and Queen, and also those of the master and brothers. The heirs of persons whose monuments were in the church or hospital were permitted to remove the monuments to consecrated places. The graves in the churchyard were to be disturbed as little as possible and friends of the dead were allowed the option of re-interment at a cost not exceeding £10, to be paid by the company, and bodies not so dealt with were to be removed to some consecrated place.

The directors appointed Mr. Thomas Tooke as the first chairman of the company, and Mr. G. G. de H. Larpent, deputy chairman. Mr. John Hall, as anticipated, became the first secretary, and remained in his position until 1853.



Mr. John Telford was the engineer. The last performance of Divine service in the church of St. Katharine took place on the 30th October, 1825, but it was eighteen months before the dock was commenced. When once begun great energy was shown in carrying it out. The first stone was laid on the 2nd May, 1827. The soil excavated for forming the dock was removed in barges to Millbank and used to fill up the old reservoirs of the Chelsea works and the southern part of Pimlico. Delays were caused by the flooding of eight acres of the excavated land by an extraordinarily high tide on the 31st October, 1827, but such rapid progress was made that the first ship was able to enter the new dock on the 25th October, 1828, with the usual ceremonies of flag flying and gun firing. But so many docks had been opened during the last quarter of a century that the occasion had lost the sense of novelty, and no notable personages were asked to the ceremony. The construction of the dock occupied less than eighteen months.

The energy displayed in the making of the dock equally marked the subsequent management of Sir John Hall, and the attractions offered led to business being diverted to St. Katharine from all the other docks on the lapse of their privileges, and in the acquisition of a good share of the increasing business in the Port. Dividends of 4 per cent. were paid during construction. But when the St. Katharine Dock was opened there was not enough business in the Port to fill all the docks and the competition for it led to insufficient rates on that which was secured. For the first three years, only 3 per cent. was earned on St. Katharine Dock stock, then it dropped to  $2\frac{3}{4}$  for a further two years, followed by a gradual improvement till 1838, when 5 per cent. was reached. From 1839 to 1846 it remained at 5 per cent. and then gradually the fortunes of the company subsided until 1863 when the rate was only  $3\frac{1}{2}$  per cent. Between 1828 and 1864, when the amalgamation with the London Company took place, there is a curious alternation of fortunes with the London Company, one company increasing its dividend when the other decreased it. Neither company was ever such a financial success as the West India Dock Company, who were able to maintain their 10 per cent. up to 1829. But the competition at last brought down the West India dividends, which sank to 5 per cent.

in 1832, and reached their low water mark of  $4\frac{1}{2}$  per cent. in 1837, just before their amalgamation with the East India Company. The experience of investors in the dock companies after 1828 did not encourage the promotion of other dock ventures, and it was not until a quarter of a century afterwards that any fresh schemes of new dock undertakings were submitted to the public.

Reference must be made to the scheme which became law in 1825 for the construction of the South London Docks. It was another of several schemes promoted at this time encouraged to hope for business by the cessation of the dock privileges and the continued increase in the number of colliers frequenting the Port. The site of the proposed dock was at St. Saviour's Dock, Southwark. The proceedings in connexion with the Bill extended over two sessions and as, in the end, the scheme proved an abortive one, it must have entailed a considerable loss on the promoters.



## CHAPTER XVI

# The Conservancy Question

THE graver causes for complaint made by the merchants had been removed by the establishment of the dock systems, and now that the privileges were withdrawn and all the docks were available for every class of trade and very hungry for business, the remaining grievance of unnecessarily high charges was likely soon to disappear. The merchant interest was therefore content, but the shipping interest was not, as it was still saddled with the port dues imposed in 1799 for the purpose of providing the funds for compensating the wharfingers. Shipowners complained of the condition of the river and of its administration by the City Corporation. Reference has already been made to the effort of the shipowners in 1824 to persuade the Foreign Trade Committee of the House of Commons to reduce the higher port dues, and this was accompanied by attacks on the Corporation. Another attack came in 1831, when the question of the regulation of steamship traffic had become a national one, having been brought to a head by the loss of the *Rothsay Castle*, a vessel stated to have been only fit for breaking up. She broke in halves on the sands off Anglesea during a storm. Of 131 people on board only twenty-one were saved. The timbers of the vessel were alleged to have been rotten.

The navigation of steamers on the Thames had been the subject of a petition to Parliament by the inhabitants of Gravesend in August, 1831, and complaints of the lightermen and watermen on the Thames were being made daily. In view of these complaints and the agitation roused by the case of the *Rothsay Castle*, the Government appointed a Select Committee under the chairmanship of Colonel Sibthorp to investigate the question. The committee sat on twelve occasions from the 15th September to the 7th October, 1831.

Though the reference to the committee was originally a general one the inquiry became practically limited to the Thames, and incidentally elicited information which is of

interest on the progress of steamship developments in the Port.

Steamships made their first appearance in the Port of London in 1815. In that year there was only one belonging to the Port. By 1830 the numbers had increased to fifty-seven. They were chiefly used for towing or for conveying passengers up and down the river. Ocean-going steamers for carrying cargo were as yet hardly in the experimental stage. Gravesend had a great interest in the new method of transit. By coach the length of the journey to London was about  $2\frac{1}{4}$  hours. Varying according to the tide, the journey by steamer was longer than or equal to that of the coach route, but the amenities of river travelling were much superior and attracted many pleasure trippers. One steamship company claimed to carry 250,000 passengers annually.

The complaints against steamers on the Thames were made on two counts. One was that the competition amongst the steamship companies induced racing between the rival captains and the other was that the watermen, whose occupation in carrying passengers was being seriously interfered with by the popularity of the steamships, put all the difficulties they could in the way of steamships.

The danger of racing was greater in the Pool where shipping was again getting crowded in spite of the large withdrawals into the docks. There was a daily service of four steamers down river, and they usually raced down the river together. There were Margate and Gravesend boats from St. Katharine Wharf, and Margate and Gravesend boats from London Bridge. The shore was so washed by the swell of the steamers that in some places it had taken all the mud away and left the shore too hard for vessels to sit on. Swamping of wherries was a common thing. Barges were unable to load more than two-thirds of the cargoes they used to carry for fear that the rough water should sink them. Lighters rubbed holes into each other and craft sank from being forced into collision with other vessels. A state of war ensued between the steamships and the watermen and lightermen. On one occasion a lighterman lashed two barges together end on and deliberately obstructed the passage of a steamboat coming down the Pool. On another occasion a barge purposely drove his sailing barge into a steam vessel swearing and saying, "I will make your wheel



clatter," endangering the lives of 364 passengers on board the steamer. A great number of accidents arose through lightermen and boatmen who used to lie on their oars and refuse to get out of the way.

It was naturally asked—what action was the Corporation as Conservators taking to deal with the scandalous state of things in the river? The answer was "nothing." There was a regulation made by the Corporation five years before, that steamships were not to go at a speed beyond three knots with the tide and four knots against it between the West India Dock and London Bridge, but this regulation was never enforced. The solicitor for the Corporation stated to the Committee that the first complaints of injury by steamboats were made in 1823 and that then public notice was given to all owners and masters of steam vessels to comply with orders, and he added that the notice was repeated in 1829, and that in 1830 the Lord Mayor had directed the solicitor to prosecute offenders, but that this had not been done. The only excuse given for this remissness was that the winter was coming on and many of the offending vessels were ceasing to run! Under the by-laws of the Watermen's Company there was a five mile speed limit, but it was held that by-laws applying to "craft" did not govern steam boats and in any case only related to men belonging to the Watermen's Company.

The Committee began their report by saying that they were impressed with a deep sense of the importance of the subject referred to them as well as with an earnest desire on the one hand not to check by legislative interference, the progress of improvement in the application of the vast powers of steam to naval purposes, as on the other hand to afford protection to the lives and property of His Majesty's subjects, and to this end they recommended that all vessels propelled by steam should be subjected to certain regulations. But they deemed it right to remark that, notwithstanding recent disasters which had befallen steam vessels, yet, that when the great number of steam vessels employed in carrying passengers and the period of time had been in use were considered, the number of fatal accidents appeared to have been comparatively few and less in proportion than the accidents to sailing vessels. They found, however, that the complaints as to the danger to which

vessels were exposed and the personal risk to human life from the manner in which steam vessels were navigated in the crowded part of the river were justified by the evidence given, and further, that vessels had not always been built of adequate strength.

The Committee recommended that it was expedient to regulate the speed of steam vessels between London Bridge and Deptford Stairs, and they advocated certain methods for securing this by means of indexes showing the number of revolutions of the engines. They further recommended that every vessel should be licensed annually under the superintendence of the Customs Department and that the maximum number of passengers to be carried should be fixed on a scale they suggested for adoption. The Committee made other recommendations touching boats, lights, paddles, steering, etc., which had a general application only.

The Committee's recommendations ended with the expression of the opinion that the wherries in use for carrying passengers on the Thames were built much shallower and slighter than formerly, inasmuch that some of the smaller ones were scarcely safe, leaving out of consideration altogether the question of the altered character of the river traffic due to the introduction of steam, and also that the regulations and directions for keeping a proper passage-way on the Thames near London for vessels and boats to pass up and down were not duly enforced by the harbour masters, resulting in mischief and inconvenience, and that the City authorities who possessed jurisdiction in this matter should forthwith have their attention called to it with a view to applying such early remedies as they might be found to require.

In 1836 a more serious attack was made on the administration of the river. The cause of contention was the crowding of vessels in the Pool and the navigation regulations, but as the case developed it became a contest as to the rights of jurisdiction between the Crown and the Corporation.

The St. Katharine Dock Company as the farthest dock from the sea, was the most interested in the navigation question, and through their energetic secretary, Sir John Hall, was the moving spirit of the new attacks. He began the agitation by collecting signatures to a petition from 5,700 persons, including many of the most influential







A VIEW OF THE RIVER FACING THE TOWER OF LONDON  
*By William Daniell, 1804*



names in the City of London, addressed to the House of Commons asking for an inquiry. The request was granted, and a Select Committee was appointed. Amongst the members were the Lord Mayor, as representing the City; and two members of the Board of the St. Katharine Docks Company, Alderman Thompson and Mr. Crawford.

The petition made four points :—

1. That safe navigation on the Thames could only be secured by the enforcement of proper regulations for mooring vessels in the river.
2. That a large portion of the coasting trade being now carried on in steam vessels the regulations for the navigation of the river should be improved.
3. That the free channel of not less than 300 feet in width required by law should be strictly preserved.
4. That whilst the speed of steam vessels should be restricted, it was equally necessary to encourage the use of boats or wherries of a size or construction more suitable to the altered circumstances of navigation.

The chief spokesman for the petitioners was naturally Sir John Hall. He began by attributing the impulse of the movement which he represented to the excitement caused by the numerous accidents which had taken place on the Thames during the previous year. Some of the accidents had been traced to want of proper caution in the management of steam vessels, others to the unskilful conduct of watermen and the unsuitable description of their wherries; but most parties concurred in the opinion that the principal cause of the loss of life and injury to property between the Tower and Deptford was the crowded and ill-regulated state of the river, particularly in the Pools, arising from a wanton disregard of the by-laws and regulations, and encouraged by the inefficient manner in which the harbour service was executed. Sir John Hall referred to the fact that the expediency of adopting remedial regulations had been recognized by Parliament having in 1831 appointed the Select Committee just referred to, but that nothing had materialized from their report. Figures were submitted showing the enormous increase of steam navigation on the river. In 1830 the tonnage of steam vessels entering the Port with cargoes was 121,734. In 1835 it had risen to 448,334. The number of voyages of steam boats engaged in the conveyance of passengers only had increased from 277

in 1820 to 2,344 in 1830, and to 8,843 in 1835. The increasing traffic had resulted in collisions, swamping of barges and boats, and destruction of valuable property due to the effects of the undulation of water produced by the action of the paddle wheels, and aggravated by the unnecessary velocity with which some of the vessels were propelled. The overloading of barges and the manning of craft by unskilful navigators were also given as contributing causes to the losses occasioned. The remedies proposed included the interdicting of the navigation of all steam vessels above Blackwall or Greenwich, which was supported by the London and Blackwall Railway Company (then just commencing its career) for obviously interested reasons. This remedy also had the countenance of the harbour master. Sir John Hall remarked on this expedient that it would unquestionably have the advantage of relieving the labour of those public functionaries at the sacrifice of some of the best interests of the Port. Though one of those interests was his own, no one can gainsay that he was justified in his conclusion that the mere transfer of the difficulty to a section of the river remote from London would render the remedy worse than the disease. The practical remedy to which he invited the attention of the Committee was the adoption of a regulation for diminishing the speed of steam vessels between Deptford and London Bridge. The difficulty that presented itself in carrying out such a regulation was that it had been held to be impracticable to regulate the speed of a vessel in such a manner as to determine the application of a penalty according to the degree of velocity with which a vessel was propelled through the water. So many circumstances affected the question of speed, such as the depth of water in which the vessel was navigating; her varying draft of water; the difference in speed through the water when proceeding against or with the tide; the effect of currents and eddies, whilst the vessel was sometimes under the additional influence of canvas; and, finally, the superior speed of some vessels as compared with that of others; circumstances all of which rendered it next to impossible to reduce the velocity of steam vessels to a rate of speed to be determined by any fixed standard. The nearest approximation to the useful object of the regulation which appeared to him to answer every practical purpose would be the



throttling of the valve of the steam pipe, thus diminishing the injection of steam producing as near as possible an approximation to half-speed.

With regard to wherries and boats, Sir John Hall called attention to the fact that the dimensions and burden of such vessels were smaller than they were required to be in 1555, at a time when the risk of navigating the river was infinitely less than it was in 1836. He urged that an improvement in their construction had become absolutely necessary for the protection of His Majesty's subjects, and submitted designs of safer craft which he suggested should be used below London Bridge, and which he said would not cost more to build than the existing wherries, viz., £22 to £24, including sculls and boat-hook.

The most important branch of the inquiry related to the obstruction to the transit of shipping arising from the crowded state of the river, and the ill-regulated mooring of vessels due to the inefficiency of the harbour service, aggravated by the impediments from shoals and mud banks, and by the progressive increase of shipping into the Port. In this connexion Sir John Hall reiterated the complaints made to the Foreign Trade Committee in 1824 respecting the lack of control exercised over their officers by the Corporation's Navigation Committee, in whose election he said no choice was made of those who from their avocations, commercial acquirements, or knowledge of the river would be best qualified for the duties, but the selection was governed with reference to the number of common councilmen in each ward and was of a rotary character. Moreover, the Corporation had no immediate power themselves to enforce by punishment, obedience on the part of the harbour master to their orders and regulations, the only remedy they possessed being to report cases of neglect of duty to the Elder Brethren of the Trinity House, who upon proof would certify to the Lord Mayor, who must in that case dismiss the offender. This circumlocutory process had not in effect been used, nor was it likely to be used while the Navigation Committee of the Corporation was the creature of its own officials.

The congestion which had been the primary cause of the animadversions of Sir John Hall had arisen from the enormous increase in the number of colliers entering the

Port. In 1792 the number was 3,871. In 1825 it was 5,580, carrying 1,850,000 tons of coals. In 1835 the number had reached 7,980 and the tonnage of coal carried to 2,298,000 tons. Of the 7,980 cargoes, 348 were discharged into the Regents Canal Basin and the remainder into barges in the river, by far the greater number being moored in the Upper and Lower Pool. An Act had been obtained in 1825 for relieving the river by the making of a collier dock in the Isle of Dogs, partly by using the City Canal site ; but the capital could not be obtained because Parliament, in pursuance of its anti-monopoly policy, had refused to sanction a clause compelling colliers to use the dock. The existing docks did not want the trade on the terms which the owners of the colliers were prepared to pay ; indeed, the accommodation was unsuitable for the business. Nor was it desirable that coal cargoes should be discharged in the neighbourhood of merchandise likely to be injured by coal dust. There was therefore no alternative but to remain in the river. It was urged that the customs of the coal trade intensified the obstruction in the river. Sales were limited at times to a certain number of cargoes and subject to the delivery only, at the option of the buyer, of 49 tons from each ship per day. Small and separate parcels of coals of the same cargo were sold from the market day to day. The merchant thus enjoyed the privilege of converting the ship into a floating warehouse and to regulate the discharge by the demands of his customers without any regard to the inconvenience to the Port. Sir John Hall estimated that with a reasonable rate of discharge, the time occupied could be reduced by one-half and a corresponding relief afforded to the demand upon river moorings. No pretext could exist for the King's highway on the Thames being converted into a wet dock. In view of the continuous expansion of the coal trade, Sir John Hall urged the construction of collier docks on both sides of the river, that a restriction should be placed on the number of colliers unloading in certain parts of the stream, and that moorings improperly appropriated to lighters should be available for cargo vessels.

The above representations had a pertinent bearing on the question, in which Sir John Hall had the greatest personal interest, viz., the maintenance of a proper navigable



channel up to the St. Katharine Dock, and he devoted much of his evidence to showing the neglect of the harbour master in carrying out the decisions of Parliament and the Corporation in this respect. He pointed out that in 1829 the Corporation's Port of London Committee had passed a by-law ordaining that "a clear passage through the Pools should be kept of a width of not less than 300 feet," which regulation received the approval of the Trinity House and was confirmed by the judges according to law. This by-law was not enforced by the harbour masters, and the House of Commons Committee of 1831 had expressed their opinion that the City authorities should give their attention to the matter. Still supine, the Corporation were in 1832 admonished by the Lords of the Committee of Privy Council for Trade to remedy the grievance and enforce obedience, and this at length led to the Corporation Port Committee in April, 1833, peremptorily to order the harbour master to carry out the by-law. The order shared the fate of most of the directions of the Committee and received no attention except to the extent of being termed by the officials as being "harsh and unnecessary." This impertinent remonstrance was passed over without notice, proving the total absence of discipline and firm supervision, and it may well be inferred from these facts whether the Committee did not connive at the defiance of their own by-law, notwithstanding their declaration afterwards that a passage of 300 feet should be kept. The insincerity of the Port Committee's proceedings was, however, made still more manifest when, in April, 1835, it was accidentally discovered that they had determined, upon a verbal suggestion of the harbour masters and without any communication with the interests concerned in the navigation of the river, to recommend that the passage through the Pools should be diminished to 200 feet and the number of colliers in the tiers increased. Sir John Hall, after recounting these charges against the Port Committee, then described their dilatory tactics when their conduct was exposed and did not spare the Corporation itself from criticism in their treatment of this subject.

The last complaint was that the river was silting up. There was no authority whose duty it was to see that the channel of the river was kept clear of shoals. The Trinity House had since the reign of Charles II had the exclusive

right of raising ballast, but though they rendered casual aid in emergencies in removing banks or shoals, they disclaimed all responsibility and administered their privileges primarily from the point of profit-making by the sale of ballast. The Corporation, though taking, as the conservators of the river, £50,000 a year from tolls upon corn, coals, fish, etc., contended that they were not by law required to remove obstructions below London Bridge, having no funds legally applicable to the purpose. The Corporation were accused of allowing large steam dredging machines to raise gravel in many parts of the river above London Bridge used by contractors in the making of concrete for railroads and other purposes, the finer particles and the sand being dropped through riddles into the stream, which, together with sand and silt washed down after rain from the macadamized streets through the sewers, formed a sediment and increased the shoals below the bridge to an alarming extent. Again, the contractors for the new London Bridge were charged with shooting immense quantities of rubbish into the river. Sir John Hall urged as a remedy that Parliament should sanction the application of the surplus of the tonnage dues—then between £4,000 and £5,000 a year—to the removal of the shoals between London Bridge and Bugsby's Hole, and that the Corporation of London should make a contribution towards the same purpose.

On the larger constitutional question involved in the administration of the Port, Sir John Hall recommended that the power of originating and framing of the by-laws and of regulating the moorings in the Thames should be transferred from the Corporation to the Trinity House with an appeal to the Lords of the Privy Council. A further suggestion was that a King's harbour master should be appointed for the River Thames (his salary being paid in moieties by the Admiralty and the Corporation) to control the other harbour masters and to see that by-laws were duly enforced, and to regulate the anchoring and mooring of ships, being accountable to the Admiralty as regards the King's ships and moorings, and to the Trinity House Corporation as regards merchant ships and the commercial moorings. Sir John Hall was careful to profess that a King's superintending harbour master would not interfere with the Lord Mayor's prerogative in the Port, but would rather



strengthen it. This not very subtle advocacy did not, however, conceal from anyone that the object was to secure the advance of at least one step towards the elimination of the Corporation from the control of the river.

A long list of witnesses, including the Admiralty Surveyor, came forward to support the complaints made by Sir John Hall. Amongst the rest, evidence was given by persons who had been members of the Corporation and of the Port Committee, and who described their proceedings. Mr. Edward Tickner, who had filled the office of chairman of the Navigation and Port of London Committees, took the strongest exception to the way that Committee was appointed, attributing all the troubles of the Port to this cause. The members were appointed by rotation and not by selection, each ward nominating a member, usually the senior member who had no appointment upon other committees. When he had served for four years he was not eligible for re-appointment if there was a junior member of his ward who had not served upon that committee, and it rarely happened that a man was able to give the Committee the benefit of the experience he had acquired during his four years of service. Mr. Tickner went on to point out how this system had been responsible for the hesitating policy in regard to the maintenance of the 300 feet channel. That question had been settled in committee after a very elaborate investigation and the report signed by nearly every member, but it was reopened by two or three dissentients who had been left on the Committee after the annual election, and the new members who had not heard the evidence were induced to agree to a different conclusion. Mr. Tickner mentioned that the present chairman was an upholsterer and that the previous one was a baker. Only two or three of the forty-eight members of the Committee had ever been connected with the river, and in their cases it was contended that though such members were the more competent to advise the Committee, there was danger of their being deferred to because of their superior knowledge and because of their strong attachment to their own interest. It did not seem to have occurred to him or anyone else that a body mostly composed of members with intimate knowledge of their work would have furnished the needful internal machinery for correcting any attempt to work the Port for

the benefit of any particular interest. In this dilemma the Port Committee had been forced to rely on their officials, and were helpless in their hands.

Unable seriously to combat the overwhelming testimony to the faulty arrangements of the Port, the Corporation began by the familiar tactics in a weak case of "abusing the plaintiff's attorney." Inspired by these tactics the Lord Mayor made the obvious point that Sir John Hall, though posing as the chairman of the Steam Packet Proprietor and Wharfingers, whose petition had procured the inquiry, was in reality only acting in the interests of the St. Katharine Dock Company, and he also suggested that paid agents had been sent round to collect signatures to the petition and that some of the signatures had been obtained in public-houses. Captain John Fisher, the principal harbour master of the Port, was the chief witness for the defence. He attributed the accidents in the river to the rapid pace of steam boats, and he claimed as an advantage of the existing congestion that if the river were less crowded with shipping the speed of the steam boats would be greater and the accidents more numerous! He had to admit that more colliers were sometimes moored in the tiers than were provided for, but excused the irregularity as having been due to large arrivals following heavy gales. He also had to admit that occasionally the channel had been narrowed down to 150 feet and that on one occasion he had himself, at the instigation of the chairman of the Coal Committee of the Corporation, violated the by-laws in order to meet a complaint of the coal trade of want of accommodation in the river. As to the suggestion that he manipulated the Committee, he said he had never given an opinion without being asked for it, but that the Committee frequently made appeals to his knowledge in order to be guided themselves as to the manner in which they should issue their regulations. Through the course of his examination it was obvious that there was much friction between himself and the representatives of the St. Katharine Dock Company, and in his cross-examination he had to confess the correctness of a minute of the Port of London Committee censuring him for an improper communication addressed to Sir John Hall. With this solitary exception of independence on the part of the Committee, it is clear that the administration of



the river had been entirely in the hands of the officials of the Corporation.

The rest of the case for the Corporation was left to a large number of coal merchants who came forward to protest against any alteration of existing arrangements by moving colliers either to tiers lower down the river or into docks, alleging that the price of coal would be seriously increased.

The question of jurisdiction not directly arising from the reference of the Committee was raised at the last moment by the appearance of Mr. Charles Jones, the Solicitor of the Admiralty, to give evidence on the question of the limits and nature of the various jurisdictions on the Thames. He handed in a statement of which the following is a summary :

The Crown by its prerogative had had the property in the sea and in all navigable rivers so high as the sea flows, and this property extended as well to the soil as the water. The Lord High Admiral had the conservancy of the great and navigable rivers, but the Corporation of London had for centuries past, by prescription or by grant from the Crown, the conservation and regulation of the Thames. The first charter which contained any express grant of the conservancy of the river was that of James I, 20th August, 1606, and if the Corporation had at all times properly exercised the duty of conservators to the advantage of the navigation of the river and of the public at large, no interference with it would have arisen on the part of the Crown or of the Lord High Admiral, but it was notorious that fines and rents had been obtained for licences to make wharves or embankments on the river without regard to the main part of its duty, viz., the conservancy of the navigation and the prevention of works tending to produce banks or shoals in the river bed. The practice of requiring a rent to be paid to the Corporation had given colour to a claim set up by them to the soil of the river to which they were not in a condition to show the least legal title. It had the effect of obtaining an acknowledgment from the parties to whom the licences were granted of a title in the Corporation, but this could not prevail against the Crown or the public. It is true the charter granted the office of conservator with its wages, rewards, fees, and profits, but rents were not specified, nor could it have been the intention of the Crown to grant the soil or freehold out of which

alone a rent is derivable, since the right of raising the soil of the river had been granted by another charter to the Corporation of the Trinity House and confirmed by Act of Parliament. About ten years previously, i.e., 1826, numerous complaints had been made to the Naval Department of the state of the river, resulting from the inattention of the harbour masters, who allowed ships to take any berths that suited them, without regard to the general convenience, especially near the King's Victualling Yard at Deptford. Remonstrances had been made to the harbour master without effect, and the Lord High Admiral had therefore prepared and issued a set of regulations prescribing the proper places for the mooring and anchoring of ships from London Bridge to the Nore. The rules were posted in different places on the shore of the river and appeared to have given general satisfaction. Recently a large shoal had grown up fronting Woolwich Dock Yard, and an application had been made to the Corporation to remove it; the answer to which was that the Corporation had no funds for such a purpose. This neglect of the Corporation had induced the Admiralty of late years to interfere in all Bills in Parliament authorizing piers, wharves, or quays, by requiring the introduction of a clause providing that the works should be subject to the superintendence of that department, and this interference had given umbrage to the Corporation, but if they would not duly execute their duty they could not justly complain of the action of the Crown, whose officer as conservator they were and from whose authority they derived their office. The statement concludes with a dictum from Lord Hale, in his "Treatise on the Ports of the Sea," to the effect that although a subject might have the property of a navigable river, yet it was "charged with a public interest of the people which may not be prejudiced or damnified." This doctrine applied with more force to the Corporation of London, who had not the freehold of the river, but were merely the officer of the Crown constituted to preserve its navigation.

Mr. Jones was asked whether the Corporation had acquiesced in the right of the Admiralty to frame the regulations described in his statement. He replied that to avoid any collision with the City, the regulations were communicated to the Corporation and that they had been



adopted by them. The intention of the Admiralty was to carry them into effect, whether agreed to or not, as it was considered that if the City would not do its duty the Crown must do their duty. He conceived that the Crown had a power over all its public servants to compel the performance of duty.

The City Solicitor, Mr. Robert Finch Newman, was put up to reply to the Admiralty Solicitor. He, too, submitted a statement, and this may be summarized as follows :—

Although the Crown had the property claimed in all navigable rivers, a subject might by grant or prescription have the interest in the water and soil of such rivers, and the Corporation had in fact been granted such interest. The Admiralty had contested the City's jurisdiction in 1597, and were then unsuccessful. The City's rights were also evidenced by Acts of Parliament extending from the reign of Richard II and by the continued exercise of such Acts as holding courts of conservancy, punishment of offenders, fines imposed for the City's own use without account to the King, regulating shipping, repairing banks and breaches, removing obstructions, making regulations for the removal of ballast, etc. As regards the fines and rents for licences, they had been levied for the purpose of preserving the public and city rights in order to prevent the parties concerned from setting up a claim to the fee simple. All monies received from that source and much larger sums had been annually applied to the purposes of the navigation. From a very early period the City's right to grant such licences had been repeatedly acknowledged by various branches of His Majesty's service. There was no inconsistency in the right of soil in the river being in the Corporation and the right of ballasting being in the Trinity House Corporation. In point of fact, the City had at various times exercised control over persons removing ballast. The City had some time since, by the authority of Parliament, contributed a large sum for the removal of particular shoals, though that work was expressly within the province of the Trinity House, who had the profits derived from the ballast. He contended that the first instance in which the Admiralty had required the introduction of any clause providing that works should be subject to their superintendence was that of the Greenwich Pier Bill, which

received the Royal Assent a few days before, and in this case an amended clause prepared by the Corporation had been substituted for the Admiralty clause. The City Solicitor then produced a statement of the expense of the conservancy administration, showing that the average cost for the previous five years had been £2,468, whilst the produce of the fines and rents for the same period had only averaged £750. He added that between 1774 and 1823 a total sum of about £36,000 had been advanced on account of the improvement of navigation and the rectification of the frontage above London Bridge. This answer did not dispose of the charge of the Corporation's critics, which was that they took tolls amounting to £50,000 a year upon coal and other goods which had been conferred upon them in virtue of their position as conservators, and that this money, which should have been spent in maintaining the Port for those who used it, had been diverted into the City purse for the benefit of householders.

Having heard evidence for sixteen days, the Select Committee made their report to Parliament on the 12th August, 1836, to the following effect :—

1. That the navigation of the River Thames had for a great length of time been subjected to serious and increasing obstructions by which the maritime approach to the metropolis had been impeded, and the shipping exposed to injury and needless detention, and that frequent accidents had occurred, attended with the loss of human life.

2. That these obstructions had been produced (a) by the crowded state of the river arising from the increasing traffic, by the introduction of steam navigation, and especially by the colliers stationed in the Pool and the ill-regulated manner in which colliers had been permitted to lie at anchor in the stream ; (b) by shoals and banks, and finally (c) by the want of an efficient supervision and a more effective execution of the harbour service. Although an improvement had taken place in the last respect since the Committee commenced their inquiries, yet they conceived that the public had no adequate security against its recurrence.

3. That the various conflicting jurisdiction and claims of the Admiralty, the Trinity House, and the Corporation over the Thames below the bridges had had a most injurious effect upon the interests of navigation, and that it was desirable that they should be consolidated and vested in one responsible body, and that means should be found to provide for the removal of shoals and obstructions in the bed of the river.



4. That a Bill should be prepared under the authority of the Government for consolidating, enlarging, and amending the laws for rendering more commodious and better regulating the Port of London and submitted to Parliament early in the 1837 session.

5. That it was expedient that a clear passage of not less than 300 feet in width should be maintained in the Thames, that colliers at anchor in the stream should be so regulated as to prevent interruption to the passage of ships, and that if as the result of preserving such passage inconvenience should be caused to the general trade in the river, it might be desirable to encourage the construction of collier docks.

6. That pending remedial measures from Parliament the proprietors of steam vessels frequenting the Thames be requested to reduce the rate of speed between Deptford and London Bridge and to carry fewer passengers.

It will be seen from this report that the Select Committee entirely adopted the views advocated by the petitioners. Their report was a condemnation of the Corporation administration and a direct call to Parliament to remove the conservancy of the river from the hands of the City. They evidently accepted the view that the City only cared for the Port for what they could make out of it, treating it as a subsidiary civic department, like the markets, and as merely a place which could be exploited for earning tolls to relieve local rates. The Lord Mayor had admitted that during the six months he had filled the office of conservator he had only once been on the river, and one member of the Corporation roundly asserted that membership of the Port Committee was only coveted because of the occasional junketings down stream. The opinion at civic headquarters of the significance of the Thames in London had sadly changed since the traditional taunt of a Lord Mayor to King James I about His Majesty's inability to remove the Thames with his capital. One cause of this meaner view of the Port was probably due to the movement westward of the residences of the merchant classes, leaving the City government to the shopkeeping classes. The Government was no longer in need of financial assistance, as had been the monarchs who had granted charter after charter to the City in exchange for money lent or loan forgiven, and this must have led to the City Corporation getting out of touch with larger national issues and contenting itself with narrower municipal ones. Nor could the agitation which had secured the adoption of the Reform Bill of 1832 be without result

on public opinion as to the continuance of such privileges as were being enjoyed by the City tradesmen. It is not surprising, therefore, to find the House of Commons Committee making a report so thorough in its condemnation of the City's management and so revolutionary in its proposals of reform.

Yet such was the strength of the forces of inertia that the recommendation for consolidation of authority was not carried out. The recommendation that the government of the Port should be consolidated into one authority was not acted upon, and it was not till 1857 that even a slight modification of the City's powers of conservancy was obtained. The energies of the City and of the successive Governments were meanwhile turned away from legislation and were directed to the settling by legal proceedings of the differences between them as to the rights of the Crown over the bed and shore of the Thames. The litigation was lengthy and costly, and was never closed by a decision. In 1846 there was a conference between the Crown and the City, ending in an agreement that a Bill should be promoted for the constitution of a Conservancy Board consisting of fifteen members—ten to be nominated by the City and five by the Crown. The Bill was introduced in 1847, but did not pass owing to the lateness of the session. It was nine years afterwards before a second conference took place, and then it was agreed that the City should recognize the rights of the Crown and that a new Conservancy Board should be formed which should receive two-thirds of the revenue from the bed and soil of the river, with other powers of levying dues. Thus was constituted the first Thames Conservancy under the Act passed in 1857.

What could have induced shipowners and merchants to be content for twenty-one years after the drastic recommendations of the 1836 Committee? One reason is, perhaps, to be found in the improvement of administration which began during the inquiry, and which was continued by the fear of the fate in store for them, put into the minds of the Corporation officers, if the old slackness persisted. Other factors were that the steamers which were gradually replacing the old sailing colliers, were of a greater tonnage and were able to make regular sailings, thus avoiding the gluts occasioned by trading vessels dependent upon the



direction of the wind. Fewer berths in the river were therefore required. With the relatively higher cost per ton, steamship owners could not afford to let their steamers remain so long idle in port as sailing colliers. But the greatest relief was felt by the competition of the new railway systems, which diverted a considerable proportion of coal for the metropolis from the river to the rail route, and which tempted local passengers to abandon the river voyage for the railways constructed on both sides of the Thames.

The mercantile public were probably pacified meanwhile by the promotion of several schemes by private venturers for constructing docks and wharves for colliers. Bills were introduced in the 1837 session for making a tidal collier dock adjoining the Surrey Canal at Deptford and for a "grand" collier dock at Rotherhithe and Deptford. The tidal dock scheme was withdrawn; the other scheme was sanctioned by Parliament, but never proceeded with. In 1839 a scheme for constructing wharves on the east and south sides of the Isle of Dogs for colliers and other vessels, was brought forward, but never got further than being the subject of a petition to Parliament. The scheme for docks at Deptford was again introduced in 1839, but did not get beyond the Committee stage. The failure of these projects was due to the prejudice of the owners of colliers against the use of docks for discharging, and as Parliament would not compel the use of the docks the schemes had to be abandoned. No dock for the special use of colliers has ever been built in the Port, and modern experience has demonstrated that riverside facilities for this class of traffic are cheaper and sufficient for the purpose.

The appeal of the Select Committee to steam-boat owners, to stop excessive speed, fell on deaf ears. The public did not discourage racing, if they did not actually encourage it. The Watermen's Company appear to have been the only active section of the Port interests in this matter. They instituted prosecutions of offenders, being moved to do so because the lightermen and watermen were the greatest sufferers by the swamping of their craft. To appease that section of the public which was agitated on the subject, another committee was appointed (this time by the Board of Trade) at the beginning of 1839, to report

generally on the question of accidents to steam vessels and to devise practical means of preventing their recurrence. The Committee consisted of only two members, Captain Pringle, R.E., and Mr. Josiah Parkes, C.E. The inquiry developed into one chiefly relating to foundering, explosions, fires on board, and the construction and maintenance of engines and boilers rather than to the question of excessive speed; and the recommendations made by the Committee were confined to the registration, periodical survey, and licensing of steam vessels.

The Watermen's Company continued their agitation for stricter by-laws on the Thames, and their records show that it took them seven years from 1839 to persuade the Corporation to adopt a new code of by-laws for regulating the steamship traffic. Every dilatory proceeding possible seems to have been taken by the City officials to delay the approval of the code. These by-laws dealt with the licensing of steam boats and their masters, the limitation of the number of passengers to be carried, the keeping of an effective lookout, the speed of vessels, and reckless navigation. Had they been sanctioned and enforced ten years before, valuable lives and property would have been saved. As it was, they came into operation at a time when the urgency of the case had ceased, owing, as above stated, to the large diversions of both the goods and passenger traffic from the river to the railways and the consequent freer state of the river.





**THE POOL, FROM LONDON BRIDGE**

From a lithograph by W. PARROTT, 1841





## CHAPTER XVII

# The Thames Conservancy

THE peace established between the Government and the City Corporation on the question of the ownership of the bed and soil of the river was consummated by the passing of the Thames Conservancy Act in 1857. This Act also marked another stage in the separation of the administration of the Port from corporation control. As the corporation appointed the majority of the representatives in the new body, the transfer of power may seem to have been more nominal than real, but the changes nevertheless were at least a challenge to the city to consider its ways besides being a forecast of even more radical changes to come.

The Act was repealed in 1894, but as it fixed the broad lines upon which all river administration was based after 1857, its main provisions invite our attention in this record.

The Conservators to be appointed by the Act were to be twelve in number. The Lord Mayor was to be one of them, two of them were to be City Aldermen, four were to be members of the Common Council of the City, one was to be the Deputy Master of the Trinity House, two were to be appointed by the Admiralty, one was to be appointed by the Lords of the Committee of Privy Council dealing with trade and foreign plantations, and one was to be appointed by the Trinity House Corporation.

In the Conservators of the River Thames were vested all the estate right title and interest of the Crown and Corporation in the bed, soil and shore of the Thames from Staines to Yantlet Creek, subject only to the reservation of such rights to the Crown in places adjacent to property in the possession of the Crown at the end of 1856. To the Conservators were also transferred all the powers, rights and privileges which had been exercised by the Crown, and such powers as had been exercised by the Corporation by prescription, usage, charter or Act of Parliament in relation to the conservancy, preservation and regulation of the Thames and its tributaries within the flow and reflow of the tide and upon the banks, shores and wharves of the Port.

For the purpose of carrying out their duties the Conservators were authorized to purchase and hold lands and buildings, and to make by-laws for the regulation, management and improvement of the river and its navigation, including the lighting of vessels at night and the mooring of timber. No owner of land forming river frontage was to be allowed to build any embankment or make any erection or drive any pile into the river bed without the permission of the Conservators, who were empowered to demand fair and reasonable payment for any licence granted to owners of land who desired to carry out such works, the payment being made by an annual rent or by lump sums. The Conservators were empowered to erect piers and landing places and to let them on lease, and also to take tolls from steamers calling at the piers. Harbour masters were to be appointed by the Conservators, but before appointment their qualifications for the office had to be certified by the Trinity House. The duty was put upon the Conservators of seeing that wrecked or sunk vessels were removed or raised, or in case of default on the part of the owner of doing the work themselves. The laying down of buoys and beacons necessary for the navigation of the river was added to their duties. All the city mooring chains were vested in the Conservators who were required to maintain them in good order and to supply additional mooring chains when wanted, and were also enabled to purchase private mooring chains by agreement. No mooring chains were to be put down by anyone without the consent of the Conservators. If wharves got out of repair or became insecure, the Conservators were to call upon the owners to effect the necessary repairs or in default to carry out the works at the expense of the owner. On the vexed question of the deepening or dredging of the bed of the river upon which the Corporation had been vehemently attacked for many years the legislation was only permissive. They were authorized for the purpose of maintaining and improving the navigation to dredge, cleanse and scour the Thames, and to deepen, shorten, widen, straighten and improve the bed, and channel and remove shoals and mud banks. For this and other purposes they were authorized to borrow up to £100,000.

The settlement of the question at issue between the Crown and the Corporation was provided for in the section



requiring the Conservators to pay over to the Crown one-third of the receipts on account of licences granted for works on the bed and shore of the river.

It was put upon the Trinity House to perform any dredging operations required by the conservators for removing shoals, shelves and banks in the river, the cost of the operations being reimbursed by the Conservators. Though the monopoly of raising soil from the river for the ballasting of ships was preserved for the Trinity House, the Conservators were to have the right of preventing the lifting of ballast from places where the removal would be dangerous to navigation or to the works of the Conservators.

The transfer of powers from the city included the right of levying tolls on shipping and with it, the moneys in the Corporation hands accumulated out of the receipts from such tolls. Surplus funds, after the cost of the performance of the Conservators' duties had been defrayed were to be applied in the usual way of such funds in those days, viz., by the reduction of the charges on shipping. The Act contained numerous savings of rights of various public bodies, the most important being that no work upon the bed or shore of the river should be executed without the previous sanction of the Admiralty.

The first members of the conservancy were :—

				<i>Representing</i>
SIR THOMAS QUESTED FINNIS, Lord Mayor				<div style="display: flex; align-items: center;"> <div style="font-size: 4em; margin-right: 10px;">}</div> <div> Corporation of London </div> </div>
ALDERMAN HALL	..	..	..	
ALDERMAN HUMPHREY	..	..	..	
JONATHAN THORP	..	..	..	
JOSEPH TURNLEY	..	..	..	
THOMAS HENRY FRY	..	..	..	
THOMAS DAKIN	..	..	..	<div style="display: flex; align-items: center;"> <div style="font-size: 4em; margin-right: 10px;">}</div> <div> Trinity House </div> </div>
CAPTAIN SHEPHERD	..	..	..	
CAPTAIN WILLIAM PIGGOTT	..	..	..	<div style="display: flex; align-items: center;"> <div style="font-size: 4em; margin-right: 10px;">}</div> <div> Admiralty </div> </div>
CAPTAIN AUSTIN, C.B.	..	..	..	
COMMODORE SHEPHERD	..	..	..	<div style="display: flex; align-items: center;"> <div style="font-size: 4em; margin-right: 10px;">}</div> <div> Board of Trade </div> </div>
CAPTAIN SULLIVAN, R.N., C.B.	..	..	..	

The Lord Mayor to be Chairman.

In 1864 the number of Conservators was increased from twelve to eighteen, there being added two representatives of shipowners, two of owners of passenger steamers, two of

owners of lighters and tugs, and one by dock owners and wharfingers. Remuneration of £1,200 was granted to the Conservators. It will be perceived that the new constitution put the Corporation in a minority of the whole board, so that 1864 marks the date when the long control of the river by the Corporation came to an end.

At the end of 1866 a still further enlargement of the numbers took place with a very important extension of the jurisdiction of the Conservators. The whole of the upper Thames as far as Cricklade had for many years been administered by a body called the Upper Navigation Commissioners. These Commissioners were an unwieldy body, consisting of the representatives in Parliament of the counties of Wilts, Gloucestershire, Oxford, Berks, Bucks, Middlesex and Surrey, and of all cities and towns in those counties—various University dignitaries, the rectors of the parishes bordering on the upper river, the owners of land of the value of £100 a year in some of the counties named, and a host of other persons assumed directly or indirectly to have an interest in the upper river. The locks were in a dangerous condition, with consequential falling off in the traffic and reduction of revenue. The sum of £88,000 had been borrowed by the Commissioners and interest was not being earned. Other difficulties had arisen in that claims were being made by persons owning locks and weirs to receive tolls from traffic, and also by millowners to the right of drawing off water, and owners of fishing rights drawing down water. It was therefore deemed advisable to abolish the Upper Navigation Commission and entrust the control of the whole of the river to the body which had seven years previously been placed in charge of the lower river navigation. The Act carrying out this alteration was passed in 1866, and it increased the number of conservators from eighteen to twenty-three. One of the five new members was to be appointed by the Board of Trade and four by the persons who were qualified to act as Commissioners of the Upper Navigation. The same powers as the Conservators possessed with regard to the river below Staines were given to them in regard to their extended jurisdiction. The power to charge tolls was conferred exclusively upon the Conservators, whilst it was enacted that anyone having rights to charge



tolls should be compensated. Five metropolitan water companies who were drawing water from the Thames were to contribute £1,000 a year each for the privilege. For the purification of the water supply of London, legislation against the pollution of the Thames was included in the Act. The opening of any sewer or drain into the Thames was forbidden, and the Conservators were put in the position of being able to penalize offenders in heavy fines for failure on the part of any persons to conform to their orders in this respect. The Conservators were required to scavenge the surface of the water from substance liable to putrefaction. Borrowing powers of £100,000 were conferred upon the Conservators, the borrowing contracted by the Upper Navigation Commissioners remaining a charge on the Conservators' revenues, subject to their own mortgages. An addition of £600 was made to their remuneration.

The Conservators' powers were enlarged and amended by several Acts passed between 1867 and 1885, but only matters of minor importance were dealt with.

In 1872 the Corporation of London recovered status in the Port by being constituted the sanitary authority in the Port under the Public Health Act passed in that year, paying out of their corporate funds all the expenses incurred in the administration of this section of their work. The Act defined the limits of the Port for sanitary purposes as those established for the purposes of the Customs laws, and gave the Local Government Board power to assign to the Sanitary Authority any powers, rights, and duties under the Sanitary Acts. Numerous provisional orders have from time to time enlarged the duties of the Sanitary Authority as sanitary legislation has developed in extent and importance. The duties have no relation to the pollution of the river itself, but may be described in the language of Dr. Collingridge, the Port Medical Officer of Health for many years, as the safeguarding as far as possible of London from the entrance by way of the river of infection and disease brought either by persons or goods or in the form of unsound food. Its officers board ships when they arrive in the Thames and remove infected persons to hospital and disinfect the vessels. They are required to abate nuisances which may be discovered on shipboard and have in their charge matters in regard to the health of sailors as affected

by the accommodation assigned to them. The inspection of frozen meat, fruit, fish, and other classes of perishable cargo landed at the docks is in their hands, as also the condemnation of all unsound food. The Medical Officer of Health also carries out inspections of canal boats. No serious question has ever been raised as to the efficiency with which this Port service has been carried out by the Corporation. Indeed, it is universally admitted that the administration has been admirable. A proposal was made in 1903 by the London and India Docks Company that the supervision of the Port Sanitary Authority in regard to the inspection of food should be extended to the wharves and warehouses outside the docks, as there was evidence that the local authorities, who were chargeable with the duties in those areas, were not so strict as the City officers were at the docks. The Corporation, however, did not seek any extension of the powers, and the Local Government Board, to whom the question was referred, decided not to adopt the proposal, contenting themselves with communicating with the Metropolitan Borough Councils interested, and urging a more stringent examination of imported food. It still seems to be open to question whether the interests of the public in this matter would not be better protected by giving the Corporation the supervision of the whole of the food stored in the public warehouses in the Port.

In the year 1887 an appeal was made to the Conservancy to improve the navigation channel between Gravesend and London. A letter was signed by thirty-six of the most important shipowners and marine insurance companies, drawing attention to the great increase in the aggregate tonnage entering the Port in the previous fourteen years, the greatly-enlarged capacity of merchant ships, and the conversion of the merchant shipping from sail to steam. Mention was also made of the foggy conditions which vessels often encountered on their voyage up-river. It was stated that several instances had occurred of large ships running aground and having to be unloaded before they were got off, and that there were several patches in the river below the Royal Albert Dock where there was not more than eighteen feet depth at low water. It was urged that this state of things was not creditable to the Port,



and that vessels ought to be able to count on as much water at all times of tide as was available in the Suez Canal. Though the demands were prompted by the London and St. Katharine Docks Company in order that their customers should be as free as those at the new Tilbury Dock to get access to the Albert Dock at any time of the tide, there was every justification for the demands in the memorial ; indeed, the Conservators did not contest the facts urged, and promised careful inquiry and consideration, but they did little to satisfy the demands of the shipping trade. This question of deepening the river to fulfil modern requirements—by far the most responsible of the functions of the Conservators—again came to the front on the reconstitution of the Conservancy in 1894.

In 1893 the London County Council, who, from its inception, had had the Port before them as a sphere in which their influence should predominate, persuaded Parliament to decide on adding seven additional members to the Conservancy Board, three to be appointed by the Council itself, and one each by the Middlesex, Surrey, Kent, and Essex County Councils. The Act making this addition contained a provision that the Conservators should bring in a Bill in the 1894 session to consolidate and amend their Acts as regards the constitution of the Board. This was done, and when the Royal Commission of 1900 began its sittings, the 1894 Act, as the Bill became, was the charter of authority and responsibility of the Conservancy. While the 1894 Act was before the House for second reading, advantage was taken of the occasion by Sir Thomas Sutherland, the chairman of the P. & O. Company, who carried on behalf of the shipowners an instruction to the Committee dealing with the Bill for widening the dredging powers of the Conservancy. In the result the ensuing negotiations terminated in an agreement for the appointment of a commission of three persons to inquire into the whole question of the improvement of the navigation of the lower river, and a clause to this effect was incorporated in the Bill.

The 1894 Act is a long complicated measure of 313 sections. Though in form it repealed the whole of the previous legislation of the Conservancy, it was in effect a Consolidation Act, with some new powers and an amendment of its constitution. Its principal features were :—

1. An increase in the numbers of the Conservancy to thirty-eight, the following bodies being represented :—

Admiralty .. .. .	2
Board of Trade .. .. .	2
Trinity House .. .. .	2
Gloucester and Wilts County Councils..	1
Oxfordshire County Council .. .. .	1
City of Oxford .. .. .	1
Berkshire County Council .. .. .	1
Borough of Reading .. .. .	1
Buckinghamshire County Council .. .. .	1
Herefordshire County Council .. .. .	1
Surrey County Council .. .. .	1
Middlesex County Council .. .. .	1
London County Council .. .. .	6
London Common Council .. .. .	6
Essex County Council .. .. .	1
Borough of West Ham .. .. .	1
Kent County Council .. .. .	1
Metropolitan Water Companies .. .. .	1
Shipowners .. .. .	3
Owners of sailing barges and steam tugs ..	2
Dockowners .. .. .	1
Wharfingers .. .. .	1

---

38

---

It will be observed that though the position of the Corporation element was completely overshadowed, there was a restoration of democratic control in the Conservancy, in that twenty-four out of the thirty-eight members were members of municipalities or county councils. The sum of £3,100 was to be set apart for their remuneration.

2. Very full powers of dredging were given to the Conservancy for the improvement of the channel and for the sale of gravel or sand raised in such deepening operations.

3. The registration of pleasure boats was put in their hands.

4. Tonnage dues of  $\frac{1}{2}$ d. per ton per voyage were chargeable on all vessels trading coastwise or to within near foreign ports, and  $\frac{3}{4}$ d. per ton per voyage on vessels trading outside those limits. The principal exemptions favoured vessels carrying passengers only and vessels under forty-five tons.

5. Separate accounts were to be kept for the river above and below Staines Bridge.

6. Power was given to borrow £200,000 for the purposes of the Act.

7. There was to be an increased payment by the Water Companies, the total sum being increased from £5,000 to £19,665.



The most important practical section of the new Act was that relating to the Commission to inquire into the necessity of deepening the river. The Commission called, the Lower Thames Navigation Commission, consisted of Sir John Wolfe Barry (chairman), Admiral Sir G. Nares, and Mr. Anthony Lyster, and was appointed by the Board of Trade on the 8th November, 1894. The evidence taken showed that the owners of all the most important lines of ships trading to London were agreed in asking that there should be a low-water depth of thirty feet up to Gravesend. A number of shipowners asked for the same depth up to the Royal Albert Dock. The Commissioners, in the course of their report, which was dated 25th March, 1896, said that in view of the foreign and home competition and the improvement in other ports, the increase in the size of ships, and the consequent great expense of any delay to them, they agreed with the proposal that much public advantage would be gained if a navigable depth of 30 feet were afforded at least up to Gravesend. The most expensive part of such works would be the section known as the Leigh Middle shoals, just above Southend, where the depth was only 24 feet, and the Commissioners pointed out that it would be useless to undertake this until a decision was taken to improve the channel between the shoals and Gravesend.

The Act of 1894 appointing the new Conservancy had provided that if any dredging operations should be recommended by the Commission the Conservators should as soon as practicable either proceed to carry out such dredging or apply to Parliament for such powers as should be desirable to enable them to give effect to the recommendations of the Commission. But the Conservators took no steps to carry out the mandate of the Act. Their view was that as the Leigh Middle section of the river was not included in the reference of the Commission there was no obligation, either legal or moral, cast upon the Conservancy to apply to Parliament for extended powers. They felt convinced that they would not receive Government assistance for the measure, and as it might cost £10,000 to £12,000 to go to Parliament they did not think it worth while to take any steps themselves. They contented themselves with

a more modest programme, the features of which were the following :—

	<i>Min. width. ft.</i>	<i>Min. depth. ft.</i>
Channel between Nore and Gravesend.. ..	1,000	26
Channel between Gravesend and Crayfordness	1,000	24
Channel between Crayfordness and Albert Dock	500	22
Channel between Albert and Millwall Docks ..	300	18

This programme not only fell short of the deepening recommended by the Lower Thames Navigation Commission, but so far as the Leigh Middle Sands were concerned, which extended for seven miles above the Nore, provided for merely the natural depth of the river, notwithstanding the fact that it was the deficient navigable depth through these shoals which formed one of the main reasons for the appointment of that Commission. The Thames Conservancy commenced work under this modified programme in November, 1896, and by November, 1900, they claimed to have completed it as far as Gravesend.



## CHAPTER XVIII

# The Victoria Dock

**B**Y the middle of the nineteenth century steam had established itself as a motive power for the propulsion of ships on deep sea voyages, and it was manifest that not only would steamships gradually supersede sailing ships, but that their size would far outstrip that of sailing vessels which up to that time had never exceeded 1,500 tons. The *Great Western*, of 2,300 tons, had made her successful voyage to America twelve years before.

The existing docks on the Thames were unfitted to receive vessels of a larger size than those already coming to the Port, and even if dock entrances could have been altered and the docks deepened, it was questionable whether steam vessels of a large size should be encouraged in the crowded Pools. It was these considerations which prompted the originators of the scheme for making a new dock on the marsh lands between Blackwall Reach and Galleons Reach, the idea being that the first section should be constructed at the west end of the site with a length of about  $1\frac{1}{4}$  miles, and of an area far exceeding any other dock in London. The scheme was taken up by the firm of contractors in which the late Lord Brassey's father was a partner, and they with other capitalists formed a company for carrying it out. An Act was obtained in the session of 1850 for making the dock, which was named the Victoria Dock. The proof that the new dock met a public demand is shown by the fact that there was no opposition to the Bill either on second reading or in committee. Four petitions which were presented against the Bill were withdrawn before the Bill went into committee. It is a curious fact that in this first Act of the Company the ordinary free water clause in favour of lighters was omitted, but the omission was repaired when the Company were next before Parliament.

The first directors who were appointed by the Act were :

SAMUEL MORTON PETO, M.P.

EDWARD LADD BETTS

JOHN PEARCE KENNARD

RICHARD TILL  
JAMES JOHN CUMMINS  
CHARLES EDWARD MANGLES

The capital authorized was £400,000, with power to borrow £133,000 after the capital stock was paid up. The Company were allowed to hold 200 acres of land beyond the land required for the docks, as pasture accommodation for the large quantities of foreign cattle which it was expected would be landed at the docks. This land was never, in fact, utilized for the purpose. The principal feature that distinguished the dock from its predecessors was that it was brought into direct communication with the railways of the United Kingdom by means of the Great Eastern Railway, whose lines ran into the dock premises. The design of the dock was different from that of the older docks. Instead of straight lines of quay wall, jetties projecting into the dock were provided on the north side of the dock. The chief advantage of this method is that it enables goods landed from vessels for the purpose of sorting, to be at once delivered to barges on the other side of the jetty without waiting for the vessel to complete her discharge, as must be the case at an ordinary quay berth. The disadvantage is that where such jetties are at right angles to the line of the dock on the plan of the Victoria Dock, rails cannot conveniently be brought from the main dock lines alongside vessels berthed at the jetties. Even to-day, though the Victoria Dock is equipped with many railway facilities, none of the jetty berths have lines running on them, and it is a distinct drawback to the dock that export goods brought in by rail have to be first dumped at the head of the sheds and trucked down the length of the shed to the ships' side. Since the Victoria Dock was made there has been an enormous increase in the percentage of goods landed from ships for sorting in preference to delivering over the side of the vessel, and the value of the Victoria Dock system of jetties is constantly attested by shipowners who are desirous of quick dispatch in emptying their ships and delivering cargo.

The capital authorized turned out, as usual, to be insufficient, and in 1853 a new Act was obtained reorganizing the Company and sanctioning enlargements and improvements of the original scheme, also an addition of



£500,000 to its capital with £166,000 mortgages. The extensions authorized were on the land to the east of the Victoria Dock, the object being to connect the dock with the river at Galleons by a wide canal or another dock, an object eventually attained many years afterwards by the making of the Royal Albert Dock. Timber ponds were also authorized by the Act. The most notable departure from precedent was the authority to make graving docks and slips for the repair and cleaning of vessels. Graving docks were, in fact, never made in this dock, but an important system of pontoons was constructed by Mr. Bidder for the repair of ships at a total cost of £500,000. Another power taken was for the purchase of Uptown warehouses on the river where delivery of goods discharged at the dock could be given. It was foreseen that merchants who could get delivery at the London Dock or West India Dock were not prepared to ship their goods in vessels discharging at a dock necessitating the double handling of a railway journey or the long and expensive cartage of six miles on indifferent roads. For this purpose the Victoria Dock Company proposed to acquire the old Steelyard premises originally the property of the Hanse Merchants at Dowgate, and, further, to run vessels of their own to and from the docks and these town premises. A clause which was subsequently put into operation enabled the Company to lease the dock and their powers to Samuel Morton Peto, Edward Ladd Betts, and Thomas Brassey for twenty-one years, but the power of appointing and removing the secretary, the engineer, and the dockmaster remained in the hands of the directors of the Company. The last clause of the Act stipulated that after the expiration of twenty-one years from the passing of the Act the rates and duties should be subject to revision by Parliament.

The Victoria Dock was opened for business in 1855 by Prince Albert. It was at once a financial success. The land had been bought at little more than agricultural value, and much of it was eight to ten feet below high water level, saving enormously in the cost of excavation. It was built cheaply through being constructed by contractors on their own behalf. The directors did not make the mistake of completing the full equipment of the dock before it was opened for business, but let it be developed as business

developed, thus saving interest on idle capital. The use of hydraulic machinery was first introduced by the Victoria Dock Company and was imitated by the other dock companies. The great handicap to the Victoria Dock remained in its distance from London, but the railway and lighterage facilities largely remedied the question of cost of transit, while the invention of the electric telegraph placed them on an equal footing with the other companies in regard to the means of communication. The directors began by offering to take vessels free of dues except for a nominal rent of 1d. per week, and this policy was so successful that by 1860 the Victoria Dock received 854,000 tons of shipping, being double that of the London Company, four times that of the St. Katharine Company, and 70 per cent. more than that of the East and West India Company. Its capital stock in 1861 was £856,000 only and its borrowed capital £216,000, and it consistently maintained a dividend of 5 to 5½ per cent.

Business was so promising that the question of developments began to assume a practical form, and an Act was obtained by the Company in 1857 giving them a further extension of five years in which to finish the new works across the marshes to the Galleons Reach, viz., a canal intended in due course to be widened into a dock. £300,000 more capital was authorized with £100,000 further borrowing powers. Power was also given to lease the new works to Messrs. Peto, Brassey, and Betts.

The circumstances of the period were, however, not propitious, and a still further extension of time had to be obtained in 1859. The Victoria Dock Company never carried out its contemplated extension, but became absorbed by the London and St. Katharine Companies in 1864.



## CHAPTER XIX

# The Fusion of Companies in 1864

THE year 1864 was an important one in Port history. There was the inception of the Millwall Dock, which became a realization in the following year, and also of the Dagenham Dock, which has so far not been realized except as a development of riverside accommodation. The outstanding events of the year were, however, the sanctioning of two schemes of amalgamation : first, the fusion of three companies, viz., the London, St. Katharine, and the Victoria Dock companies into the London and St. Katharine Dock Companies ; and, secondly, the fusion of the Commercial Dock Company with its immediate neighbour, the Grand Surrey Docks and Canal Company, into the Surrey Commercial Dock Company.

Having regard to the objects of the two Bills, it is strange that they had such a smooth voyage through Parliament. The London and St. Katharine Bill was formally opposed in Parliament, but the motion for its rejection was withdrawn. Ten petitioners appeared against the Bill when it was before the House of Lords Committee, and the counsel for some of the petitioners was heard against the preamble, but the opposition was mainly on clauses affecting local authorities and railway companies. The Surrey Commercial Bill was not opposed in Parliament, and here again the opposition in Committee was that of local authorities against clauses.

The amalgamations were forced upon the companies by the necessities of the case. Competition had reduced the dividends of the London Company to  $3\frac{1}{8}$  per cent. in 1863 and of the St. Katharine Company to  $3\frac{1}{2}$  per cent. The Surrey and Commercial Companies had maintained their dividends, but the pressure was getting greater, and with the Victoria Dock competition in existence and the Millwall Dock scheme threatening, the directors wisely thought consolidation of interests the most desirable way of meeting the situation. Already threatening was another class of competition, viz., that from the wharfingers in the river.

The competition set up by the removal of the privileges of the three earliest dock companies had been intensified by the action of Parliament in 1832, when a warehousing Act was passed conferring a wide discretion on the Commissioners of Customs, almost wholly sweeping away the restrictions affecting the legal quays throughout the Port. The area of competition was still further extended by the free trade policy of successive governments owing to which the number of dutiable goods became continually diminished. Thus, whereas in 1842 the number of such goods was 1,052, by 1860, when Mr. Gladstone brought in his famous Budget, it was reduced to 48. The situation, therefore, was that while there were fewer goods requiring bonded accommodation, there were more warehouses to receive them. Another grievance of the dock companies, which will be dealt with later, was that, while their privileges had been allowed to lapse, the section in their Acts enabling barges to enter the docks free of charge to take away goods from ships to the warehouses of their competitors had been retained, and was inserted in every Act for the making of new docks. The one bright spot was the continued increase in the trade of the Port, to which doubtless the extended facilities had contributed. To accommodate this new business new warehouses were beginning to be erected on the riverside in place of the old buildings discarded by the making of the docks and intended to cater for the warehousing business. Merchants naturally preferred their goods housed near the central markets. The promoters of the wharves had probably discovered from their predecessors that the rates charged at the docks on goods were more remunerative than on ships, and if they had not done so the willingness of the Victoria Dock Company to let vessels into the dock free would have opened their eyes to the fact that it was not the earnings on shipping to which Dock Companies looked for a remunerative return. The wharfingers had therefore a margin of profit to employ for the purposes of competition, and did not fail to use it.

The chief assets of the dock companies were their reputation for security and the influence of the directors. It is a question, however, whether the scheme of constitution of the boards of the companies was an ideal one from the point of view either of proprietors or the Port. For many





Engraved by J. B. G. G. G. G. G.

LONDON.  
*The New Custom House 1816.*

J. B. G. G. G. G. G.





years before 1864, and until the disappearance of the companies in 1909, the directors were almost without exception chosen for the business which they could influence to the company they were asked to serve; their ability to manage a big undertaking was seldom considered. What did the directors obtain? The salary offered was small—usually £150 a year. There was a certain amount of prestige in being a dock director, especially when joint stock companies were few and the dock companies privileged bodies. But that prestige was much reduced by the middle of the nineteenth century. It could not, therefore, have been without influence in the consideration of an offer of a directorship that as a member of the Board he would have a voice in the facilities offered to his trade and in the assessment of charges. Competition, whilst affecting the dividend on his £1,000 or £2,000 stock bought for qualification as a director, would have compensation in benefiting him as a merchant or shipowner. It would be difficult for proprietors to contest the general principle that, however they might suffer from reduced dividends, it was the duty of the directors to defend the business when it was attacked by meeting the enemy on his own ground. And even if dissatisfied proprietors criticized the directors at half-yearly meetings, the latter could always beat up enough friends to support them. Proxy voting was not then in operation, and few proprietors would come up from the country in response to circulars from the critics. The directors always got their own way. Only one instance is known in which the recommendation of a Dock Board to the proprietors was modified when brought forward at a meeting.

The merit of competition was that it kept London a relatively cheap port, and by that means tended to attract business where the question of charges was a factor for consideration. But it is a grave question whether it did not also make the investment of capital in docks too precarious. It must be admitted that the idea of the customers managing their own businesses was an excellent one in that it made the docks popular with the customers, and if in consideration of this they had been bound to secure a minimum dividend to the proprietors the investor would have had no cause to complain. An even more serious

objection was that the policy of board composed of merchants or shipowners allied to special trade which became identified with the various docks in the course of the competition was to develop the undertakings for the benefit of their own trades and without regard to the welfare of the Port as a whole. No one but the company promoter was out for establishing enterprises which should be directed to capturing new business.

The above considerations are referred to with the object of pointing out that in 1864 another opportunity was lost of reorganizing the Port on a basis which would have secured unity of management in the interest of the Port and have saved much waste of expenditure and misplaced energy. Competition was not abolished by the fusion of the London, St. Katharine, and Victoria systems because it left out of account the East and West India Dock Company, and still more the wharfingers. But the amalgamation pacified proprietors for a time by holding out the expectation that besides saving unnecessary reductions of rates they would lead to economies in administration. For a short time there was a better return on the capital in the case of the new London and St. Katharine Docks Company, and then followed a period of reduced dividends due to competition and an expenditure on large extensions which could not be fully utilized for many years.

The Acts of Parliament under which these two fusions took place still regulate for all practical purposes the working of the docks concerned, and are therefore described below.

The preamble of the London and St. Katharine Docks Act gives the amount of the capital of the three companies as follows :—

	<i>Capital Stock.</i>	<i>Borrowed Capital.</i>
	£	£
London Company .. ..	3,816,897	1,121,413
St. Katharine Company ..	1,939,800	678,853
Victoria Company .. ..	857,318	172,480
	<hr/> £6,614,015	<hr/> £1,972,746

making a total of £8,586,761.

The undertaking of the St. Katharine Company included the Cutler Street and New Street warehouses which they had bought from the East India Company.



The financial terms of the amalgamation were as follows :—

Capital stock of the London and St. Katharine companies were put on an even basis by the proprietors of company receiving the equivalent amount of their holding in capital stock of the new company. All mortgages or debenture stocks were to become borrowed capital in the new company.

The Victoria Dock interest was more complicated, as the property had been let on lease to Messrs. Peto Brassey and Betts, as authorized by Parliament. The leaseholders received from the new company 4 per cent. debenture stock producing £42,500 per annum, and out of this they agreed to pay the Victoria Company's proprietors £107 10s. for every £100 of capital stock and a premium of £1 10s. a share on certain new shares issued by the company. The liability for the repayment of monies borrowed by the Victoria Dock Company was to be assumed by the London and St. Katharine Docks Company.

The new capital powers for the amalgamated company were as follows :—

£420,000 capital or preference stock,

£150,000 debenture stock,

in addition to the £1,062,500 created for the purpose of paying out the lessees of the Victoria Dock.

The members of the board of the London and St. Katharine companies were to form the new Board, whose maximum number was fixed at 45, with power to reduce the number to 36, the quorum to be 13.

As regards rates on vessels for dry and wet docks, they were to be reasonable and no maximum was fixed. Rates on goods were to be subject to a comprehensive schedule attached to the Act. Rates on barges were not to exceed those on vessels trading coastwise. Barges entering to receive or discharge goods to or from any vessel were to be exempt from rates, and the goods so discharged or received were equally to be exempt.

The Company were given power to acquire forty acres of land by agreement and to let on lease any lands not immediately required for dock purposes.

The government of the Company's affairs was made subject to the Companies' Clauses Acts of 1845 and 1863, and also to the Harbour Docks and Piers Clauses Act of 1847, an Act with a large number of model clauses applicable to port undertakings. The making of by-laws with the confirmation of the High Court was permitted. Amongst the most important purposes of these by-laws were those for regulating the management of the warehouses, determining the persons who should be permitted to enter the docks, regulating the time and manner of paying rates and charges, preventing obstruction to business, directing, regulating or preventing the use of fires and lamps, preventing the smoking

of tobacco on the dock premises, regulating the days and hours when the warehouses and vaults should be opened for business, and for preventing damage being done to any goods within the docks.

The general administrative clauses of the Act included provisions to the effect that :—

1. Persons throwing ballast, stones, or other articles into the dock could be prosecuted.

2. The Company could, with the consent of the conservators of the Thames, take gravel, ballast, or sand from the river for the purposes of their works.

3. Cargo could be landed or shipped only at such berths as the Company assigned for the purpose.

4. The Company could forbid vessels to commence discharge of cargoes until the whole cargo was duly entered at the Custom House.

5. Where owners of vessels did not discharge their vessels with dispatch the Company should be able to discharge such vessels themselves, making a reasonable charge for the service.

6. No vessel should lay at the moorings outside the river entrances to the docks for more than one hour before entering or after leaving the dock, except with the permission of the Dockmaster.

7. No gunpowder or loaded fire-arms should be brought into the docks, and no master of a barge should receive or deliver from his craft upon any part of the Thames within 200 yards of any of the docks' entrances more than 25 lb. of gunpowder.

8. No fees or perquisites or rewards should be accepted by any officer or servant of the Company.

9. Competent surveyors in the employ of the Company should be authorized to examine goods on board ships when required by the master to do so with a view to ascertaining whether any injury or damage was occasioned by improper stowage and issue certificates in accordance with his findings.

10. For the prevention of accidents, every person sending, aqua fortis, oil of vitriol or other goods of dangerous quality should state the nature of such goods on the outside of the packages.

11. Gatekeepers appointed by the Company should not permit any goods to leave the gates and entrances to the docks without passes signed by authorized officials.

12. Vessels in respect of which rates and charges were payable could be detained in the docks until such charges were paid.

13. In cases where charges on goods were not paid the Company should have power to sell the goods, accounting to the owner for any balance after realization, but no goods except those of a perishable nature should be sold until the expiration of six months after receipt at the docks.

14. Constables of the Company should be entitled to board any vessel in the docks and search the same and take all necessary measures for the prevention or detection of felonies which they might have just cause to suspect.



15. Dockmasters should control navigation in the river within 100 yards of the river entrances and should be empowered to order all vessels to be dismantled in such manner as they thought proper and safe for the vessels, to have such quantity of ballast or dead weight in her hold as he judged requisite, and to have substantial hawsers for mooring to dolphins and mooring posts or rings. They should be empowered to order out of the dock any lighter or other craft after it had been there for more than twenty-four hours, to require the owner of any tar, hemp, or other combustible matter to remove it two hours after having given written notice, and to pay the expense of watching such articles by "careful and sober" persons appointed for the purpose.

The Act came into force as from the 1st July, 1864.

The Act for the amalgamation of the Commercial Dock Company and the Grand Surrey Docks and Canal Company came into force from the 1st January, 1865. The capital of the new Surrey Commercial Dock Company thereby formed consisted of the following stocks and shares of the old companies converted into capital stock :—

Commercial Ordinary Stock .. ..	£551,851
Commercial Preference Stock.. ..	154,000
Surrey Ordinary Shares created before 1st December, 1863, with £17 10s. per cent. added .. ..	322,420
Surrey 1st Preference Shares .. ..	199,000
Surrey 2nd Preference Shares.. ..	49,000
	<hr/>
	£1,276,271

with the addition of an amount representing the Surrey ordinary shares created on and after the 1st December, 1863, which was not ascertainable until the 1st January, 1865.

The borrowed monies outstanding at the time of the amalgamation amounted to £181,300. In respect of part of this amount, the holders had the right of conversion into Surrey Ordinary Shares up to the 31st December, 1864 ; hence the difficulty in fixing the exact amount of the capital stock at the time of the fusion.

Powers were given to the new Company of raising £400,000 additional capital stock and £92,000 by borrowing.

The number of the Board was fixed at twenty-five, the first directors being the members of Boards of the two companies at the commencement of the Act.

The Company were permitted to buy by agreement any lands not exceeding 75 acres, and were authorized to proceed with the deepening and widening of the Commercial Dock.

While the London and St. Katharine Company were not subjected to any maximum rates on shipping, the Surrey Commercial Company were limited to 1s. per register ton on loaded vessels and 6d. on light ships to include the use of the docks for four weeks after which, the rate was not to exceed 1d. per ton per week. A schedule of rates on goods was prescribed for grain, flour, seed, and various classes of timber.

On other goods the Company could charge the same rates as were in force at other docks. The rates for the use of the canal were assessed on a mileage and tonnage basis.

The administrative clauses were on the same lines as those applying to the London and St. Katharine Act adapted to meet the differing circumstances.

There were many saving clauses for the protection of the different bodies and persons affected by the fusion ; but, as in the case of the London and St. Katharine Act, no clause was inserted for the protection of those most likely to be affected, namely, the officers and servants of the companies.



## CHAPTER XX

# The Small Docks

THE canal of the Regents Canal and Dock Company affords the chief water communication between the Port of London and the Midlands, and though the dock is subsidiary to the canal, it accommodates colliers and small timber and other vessels. The Company was formed in 1812 for making and maintaining a navigable canal from the Grand Junction Canal at Paddington to Limehouse, where it joins the Thames. In later years powers were given to construct a basin for vessels at the Limehouse end of the canal. The canal was opened on the 1st August, 1820. From time to time afterwards the Company enlarged, deepened, and improved the canal. The dock works of the Company consist of the Limehouse Dock with a water area of ten acres and about four acres of quays and wharves. The ship entrance is 350 feet long, 60 feet wide, and the sills laid 26 feet below Trinity high water-mark, enabling vessels drawing 20 feet to come in on the worst neap tides. The entrance to the dock is about two miles below London Bridge. At jetties in the dock, cargoes of coal are transhipped and weighed with rapidity and small breakage into craft for the river and inland navigation up the canals. The canal is navigable for barges of 100 tons burthen, and passes through Stepney, Mile End, Bethnal Green, Islington, St. Pancras, Marylebone to Paddington. Several of the railway companies have termini on the banks of the canal. Modern pumping appliances facilitate the passing of traffic, and economize water in times of drought or shortness of water. The Hertford Union Canal is the property of the Company. It communicates with the Regents Canal at a point  $1\frac{1}{2}$  miles north of the Limehouse Dock, and terminates by a junction with the River Lea, which is navigable for barges of 70 tons burthen as far as Hertford. The Company have reservoirs at Ruislip and Hendon with a total storage capacity of 728 million gallons.

### MIDLAND RAILWAY DOCK

This is a small open dock situated at Blackwall, the

Thames terminus of the Midland Railway. It is made on ground formerly occupied by Messrs. Wigram's shipbuilding yard.

#### CHELSEA DOCK

The Great Western Railway have their Thames terminal at the Chelsea Dock, another small open dock only capable of accommodating barges.

#### POPLAR DOCK

This is entirely devoted to the Thames service of the London and North Western and Great Northern Railway Companies. It is held under an old lease from the East and West India Dock Company. The history of the dock is given elsewhere.





MESSRS. SCRUTTON, SONS & CO.'S "SPHEROID"

*Built at Bermuda for the West India trade, 1826; broken up in London, 1883*





## CHAPTER XXI

# East & West India Dock Company

THE East and West India Dock Company was, as its name denotes, an amalgamation of the West India Dock Company and the East India Dock Company. The amalgamation came into force as on the 16th July, 1838, and the Act of Parliament authorizing it was one of the very earliest public Acts passed in the reign of Queen Victoria, being Chapter 9 in her first session of Parliament. The East and West India Dock Company represented the oldest of the dock companies and preserved its original name until 1901, some 62½ years, a few months' longer period than that during which its old rival, the London Dock, bore its original name from 1802 till 1864.

The Act sanctioning the amalgamation is a very short one. The preamble is longer than the body of the Act, and after the usual recital of old Acts, gives the reason why the amalgamation was sought and authorized. It relates that when the East India Docks were made it was not necessary to provide warehouses at those docks as all merchandize belonging to the East India Company or consigned for sale at the India House when landed at the docks were conveyed to the warehouses of the East India Company in London, that the East India Company had no longer any shipping or trade, and that though some warehouses had been built at the East India Docks to take goods brought in there by vessels which had replaced those of the company, these warehouses were inadequate for the business offering. On the other hand the West India Dock Company had surplus warehouse space due to the fact that during the Napoleonic wars the demands of the West India trade had been abnormal, and that the West India Company had provided accommodation on an abnormal scale and could not fill it in normal times. It was further stated that a large proportion of the trade of the Port was now being carried on in steamers, and that if these steamers could be attracted into the East India Dock, their cargoes would be protected against theft, the public revenue would be protected, and

the number of serious accidents caused by steam vessels navigating the river above Blackwall would be greatly prevented. It scarcely needs special insight to discern that the real object of the amalgamation was to put an end to the competition between the two companies, which, though it had drawn away business from the West India Company, had not sufficiently enriched the East India Dock Company. The reference to the prevention of steamboat accidents was a sop to the public to acquiesce in the amalgamation, the public mind then being agitated by the number of fatal accidents due to steamboat racing on the river.

The consideration agreed for the purchase of the East India Dock Company was the issue to them of £685,668 of capital stock of the West India Dock Company, thereby increasing the capital stock of that company to £2,065,668. To the individual proprietor this meant the exchange of £100 of East India Dock stock for £110 of West India stock. The dividends paid in the previous year had been  $4\frac{1}{2}$  per cent. on the West India and 6 per cent. on East India stock. The first board of the amalgamated company was to be thirty-two, of whom twelve were to be old directors of the East India Dock Company. The debts and obligations and assets of the East India Company were to pass to the amalgamated company.

As regards the constitution of the new company, an Act had been obtained in 1831 for the reconstitution of the West India Dock Company, and this Act was incorporated with the Amalgamation Act as governing the powers and obligations of the East and West India Dock Company. This 1831 Act performed that function as regards the older sections of the East and West India Dock undertaking until the end of 1920, and therefore calls for a brief summary of its provisions. The 1831 Act begins by repealing the whole of the previous Acts obtained by the West India Company and incorporates the proprietors as a company for the purpose of making, improving and maintaining their docks and warehouses by the style and name of the West India Dock Company with perpetual succession and a common seal. The usual provisions for the passing of assets and liabilities to the newly constituted company are inserted, as also the machinery for sales and transfer of stock. Two



general courts of proprietors are to be held yearly at the West India Dock House (then in Billiter Square) or at any other appointed place. The manner of voting is the same as in the 1799 Act, stockholders being obliged to hold stock for twelve months before being qualified to exercise the vote. Patriarchical legislation was included providing that the company in general meeting assembled might make "by-laws, constitutions and ordinances" for the better governing, regulating and managing the concerns of the company, with power to impose fines and forfeitures upon directors, officers and servants. Other sections besides setting out divers offences on the part of the public punishable by fines and penalties, give the directors power to make such rules and regulations as may seem to them expedient for the good government of the staff and labourers, and also for the regulation and management of the business of the company including the admission of vessels, the discharging and warehousing of goods, the hours of opening and many other incidental matters with power to impose penalties for the breach of such rules and regulations up to 40s. for each offence. No previous sanction from the Courts or any other controlling body was necessary to legalize these rules and regulations. The sections relating to the appointment of directors mark the change in the position caused by the sale of the City Canal to the company in 1829. The provision of 1799 for the appointment of six representatives of the City was allowed to lapse, and while the old number of twenty-one directors is preserved, the Corporation representatives are to be replaced by six proprietors with the ordinary qualification of £2,000 stock. The provision under which directors had stood aside for one year out of five also disappears and retiring directors were allowed to be re-elected if the proprietors so desired.

The further capital powers of the company were limited to £320,000 either by the issue of capital stock or mortgages.

Then there is a series of powers for acquiring lands, diverting highways, altering sewers, building piers, maintaining quays, roads, etc., common to all dock Acts. The rates on shipping were to be "reasonable," lighters not to pay more than coastwise vessels with the goods in them, and to be exempted when engaged in receiving from or

delivering to a ship. Rates on goods were also to be "reasonable." No maximum schedule of rates either on goods or shipping is provided. The Act declared that the whole of the docks made before the Act was passed and to be made under the Act were to be deemed part of the Port of London, and the quays and wharves were to be to all intents and purposes legal quays and wharves for the landing and shipment of every class of merchandize. These privileges were to be extended to the South Dock (which name had been given to the City Canal purchased of the Corporation in 1829) and to any other dock made under the Act which might be certified by the Treasury to be sufficiently enclosed and defended. The interests of the dry dock owners was still so powerful that they were able to retain the section prohibiting the company from building or repairing ships or owning dry docks, and though the company were allowed to lease or sell the dry docks owned by them at Limehouse, they were prohibited from making any communication between it and the docks of the company.

The amalgamation of the East and West India Companies brought into the common use the town warehouses which the East India Dock Company had bought from the East India Company on their giving up their trading associations. These warehouses were the greater portion of several groups of warehouses in the City of London covering altogether an area of ten acres of ground and a floor area of about thirty acres. All of them had been built by the East India Company towards the close of the eighteenth century for the purpose of storing the tea, silks, spices, indigo, etc., which formed the valuable cargoes brought home by the celebrated Indiamen. The warehouses in question were at Cutler Street, Fenchurch Street, Jewry Street, Billiter Street and Crutched Friars. They were offered at auction by the East India Company in 1835 and subsequently sold by negotiation to the dock companies. The Cutler Street warehouse was acquired by the St. Katharine Docks Company and the others by the East India Dock Company, with the exception of the Jewry Street warehouse which was acquired by the East and West India Dock Companies on joint account. The total sum paid was £370,000. The only survivor is the Cutler Street warehouse, the largest of the group, and it is still used for the same purpose for which



it was erected in 1782, though silk has diminished in volume and China tea has been supplanted by Indian. The buildings are of the dignified and spacious character identified with the period, and time has left only superficial marks on the structure. The warehouses which have been pulled down have disappeared for reasons connected with the desire to realize valuable city lands, or, as in the case of Crutched Friars, to provide a site for Port offices.

Between 1838 when the amalgamation took place and the year 1870 when Colonel du Plat Taylor became the secretary of the company, the history of the company is one entirely free from heroic measures of any kind. Accommodation of a limited extent was provided as it was wanted. The tendency was decidedly to make the most of what business was offering but not to seek it, to live quietly with the neighbours, and to spend as little as possible on maintenance and new works and when this was done to charge both to revenue account. Between the amalgamation in 1838 and 1867 not a penny was raised of new capital. Competition was not met in any determined spirit, and the only attempt to stem it was the hopelessly futile effort in 1855 in concert with the London Company to persuade Parliament to cancel the exemption sections of the Dock Acts relating to charges on barges.

The few outstanding events of this period may now be related. One was the making of the Blackwall Pier in connexion with the Blackwall Railway. The Blackwall Railway was one of the earliest constructed in the kingdom. There were originally two schemes, and the promoters having come to an understanding, the present line was opened with a terminus originally in the Minories, and subsequently extended to Fenchurch Street. The dock company subscribed to the scheme. The Blackwall station, with the wharf adjoining known as the Blackwall Pier, was erected on the dock property. The deep water at this point had for two centuries been the anchoring ground for East Indiamen and the wharf naturally became one of the chief points of embarkation for emigrants to the Colonies, and for trippers to Gravesend and Margate. The pierhead has for the last twenty years been deserted as a passenger landing or embarking place, having been superseded for its original purpose by the superior facilities

available at Tilbury. It is now used by the people of Poplar as an open space with the finest view of the Thames in the Metropolitan area.

The present Poplar Dock of the North London Railway had its beginning in 1850. It had originally been made as a reservoir to keep up the head of water in the West India Dock, and in 1833 it was brought into use as a pond for the storage of floated timber. In 1846 the North London Railway had its beginnings as the East and West India Docks and Birmingham Junction Railway (a name which only survived seven years) running a line from Chalk Farm to the West India Dock with the object of bringing the manufacturing districts into direct railway connexion with the West India Docks. The scheme was promoted to counter the Victoria Dock scheme which was offering similar railway facilities. The East and West Company subscribed £50,000 towards the new railway and had the right of appointing three directors, a privilege they exercised until 1887, when driven to sell their shares for the purpose of assisting in the financing of the Tilbury Dock they lost the privilege. Under agreements made in 1850 and 1857 with the railway company the timber pond was leased to them and they converted it into a dock and terminal goods station. The dock was named the Collier Dock as the contemplated business was that of discharging coal from colliers into railway trucks for distribution in the districts served by the new line. The Collier Dock in question was the eastern of the two parallel docks now known as the Poplar Dock. The western arm was opened by the North London Railway in 1877 on land subsequently purchased from the dock company. The name of the dock was later changed from the Collier to Poplar Dock. The railway company had the right to make an entrance from the Collier Dock direct into the Thames in order to avoid the necessity of bringing their vessels through the Blackwall Basin, so saving the payment of tolls to the dock company. They were persuaded to abandon this right in 1874. Though for the time being income would have been sacrificed to the dock company had the railway company exercised their rights, the bargain was not so good as it looked, as improvements in the principal entrance to the West India Docks are now hampered by reason of the Authority having to maintain a passage through the



Blackwall Basin for vessels using the Poplar Dock. The course of time has largely changed the business at this dock. Few vessels now use it and it is principally devoted to the purposes of an ordinary waterside depot of a railway company.

Though the City Canal had been purchased in 1829 with the object of converting it into a dock, very little was done during the next generation to transform the idea into actuality. Part of the canal was widened into a pond for storing floated timber, and small vessels requiring to fit out were allowed to lie up there. The directors could have anticipated the Victoria Dock scheme by utilizing the canal site for the steamship trade. Every advantage which the Victoria Dock offered could have been afforded, whilst the advantage of having two miles shorter road communication would have made a new dock for larger steamers on the canal site sufficiently superior to challenge any opposition. The opportunity given was lost, and it is to this neglect that the leadership of the Port, once enjoyed by the West India Dock Company, gradually passed to the London Dock Company. The success of the Victoria Dock Company left the East and West India Dock Company for the time being to rely upon the sailing vessel trade and its still large volume of warehousing business, which, however, was being threatened by the attacks in flank from the wharfingers. But the propounding of the Millwall Dock scheme in 1864, following upon the drain upon their shipping caused by the rapid supplanting of sailing vessels by larger steamships and consequential transfers of business to the Victoria Dock, at length compelled the East and West India Company to make a serious endeavour to meet the threatened loss of the major part of the shipping section of their business. The result was the scheme for the construction of the South West India Dock, which was put into execution thirty-five years after it had appeared in the Act of 1831 as desired by the company. The dock was begun in 1866 and opened for business in 1870 in an unfinished state. It was, in fact, then little more than a sheet of water surrounded by quay walls. False economy characterized the scheme throughout. Having deferred improvements so late, the natural instinct of the re-awakened commercial mind would be to see that what had been lost by apathy

was more than compensated by the new enthusiasm. So far from this being the case in the present instance, the directors actually made the South West India Dock considerably less commodious than those of the rivals who had stolen their business. Only in one particular did the dock offer better facilities. It was 29 feet deep at spring tides, against 25.6 at Victoria Dock and 28 at the Millwall. But in the most essential feature of a dock, viz., that of its entrance, it was hopelessly outclassed, the old lock of 55 feet wide was retained without alteration, as against 80 feet at the Victoria and Millwall Docks, and the effect of this was to limit the size of vessels which could use the dock to about 6,000 tons gross register.

The Junction Dock, a small dock joining the South West India Dock to the Blackwall Basin, a minor but useful improvement, was constructed in 1864.

The timid policy of the East and West India Dock Company is largely to be attributable to the composition and procedure of the board. The Act of amalgamation had fixed the board at thirty-two, with power to increase it to forty, and this maximum number was eventually reached. It was the practice for the chairman not to remain in office for more than two years, he having been deputy chairman for two years before occupying the position of chairman. The directors' pay was £150 a year, whilst the chairman and deputy chairman only received £200 each. There was little incentive to any member of the board to apply himself vigorously to the interests of the company. The inevitable result was that the prosperity of the company depended upon the initiative and ability of the officials of the company. The principal officers were the secretary, whose office was in town, and the superintendent, whose headquarters were at the dock. The secretary attended to matters referable to the directors' meetings and questions of account. The superintendent managed the practical work at the docks. The secretary was generally a man of superior education appointed in middle life from the outside, whilst the superintendent was usually a man of the lower middle classes who had risen from the ranks with the typical narrow outlook of the period. There was no management by a man able to judge policy and large questions from their bearing on the undertaking as a whole as would have been secured



if the directors had appointed one of their number as managing director, or had so organised their staff that they could promote promising young men from their staff who were sufficiently well educated for the leading positions in the service. In the case of the East and West India Dock Company in the period under review, the secretaryship was held by Mr. George Collin, who had been a clerk in the War Office. On the retirement of his predecessor in 1840, the directors, unable to fill the vacancy from the the staff of the Company, had approached the Duke of Wellington asking him to nominate a gentleman as successor. The Duke suggested Mr. George Collin. He was appointed without any consideration being given to other candidates, and he remained secretary for thirty years. What grounds the Duke had for recommending a clerk in the War Office for the highest position in a commercial business do not appear in the minute books except that he was a highly trustworthy gentleman and recommended by the most distinguished soldier of his generation. Mr. Collin doubtless applied himself to learning dock business to the best of his ability, but was always at a disadvantage as compared with the superintendent Mr. Hickson, and it is not surprising that when Mr. Collin's successor came to be appointed he found that the secretary's office had become to a very considerable extent the echo of a rule exercised by Mr. Hickson at the docks. An organization run on such lines was bound to become effete in its policy and slack in its administration.

Such was the position of the company when Colonel J. L. du Plat Taylor was in August, 1870, appointed as secretary of the company, a title to which general manager was added later, though in effect he always occupied the dual position for the eighteen years he was the chief executive officer of the company. Colonel du Plat Taylor was a remarkable personality. He was a man of intense energy, especially applying it to improving the efficiency of administration of the docks, with an open mind which enabled him to consider suggestions on their merits, and a strict disciplinarian, yet with a singular charm in appreciating good work which enabled him to obtain the best out of the staff under him. His ideal was to provide the best and most modern facilities in his docks. He took infinite pains that the training of the

members of the staff should be thorough and believed in having a well-paid and contented staff. The best proof of his work in this respect is shown by the fact that twenty years after he had retired from the management of the East and West India Dock Company almost all the higher appointments of the London and India Docks Company were held by officers who had been members of his staff. He mastered the essential principles of dock management after very few years of experience, and if his financial training had only been equal to his great capacity in every other respect he would have attained the reputation of being not only the most efficient but the most successful dock manager in the history of the dock companies.

The new spirit imported into dock affairs under Colonel du Plat Taylor's management may be illustrated by several examples. To keep up the dividend of 7 per cent. in the face of a falling business the maintenance of the East and West India docks had been starved for several years before 1870. Whilst the average sum yearly spent in repairs in the years 1862-1864 had been £27,000, in 1869 the amount was only £11,000, and in 1870 it was as low as £7,700. From the years 1871 to 1877 it was necessary to spend an average of £34,000 a year to make up for neglected repairs in the previous years. The dividend naturally suffered in the later years.

The question of new works to bring the undertaking up to date was even more urgent for whilst neglected maintenance could be recovered by an expenditure of money, the prospects of regaining business lost by neglect to provide adequate accommodation for the progressive requirements of trade, were remote. In the case of the new South Dock the previous management had been content merely to construct a huge basin of water surrounded by quay walls with one side of the dock furnished with jetties at right angles to the walls. High warehouses had been built in the face of declining warehousing business whilst quay sheds to the extent of only about 10 per cent. of the line of quay were provided with only two cranes. None of the company's advisers had apparently been able to perceive the signs of the times that accommodation for rapid transit of goods from ship to consumer was more in demand than the storage of the goods at the docks, and yet the experience



of their successful rivals at the Victoria Docks should have proved enlightening on this vital point. Other defects need not now be dwelt on. It was Colonel du Plat Taylor's task to remedy the position and £130,000 was spent in completing the dock, bringing the cost up to £750,000. Till the maximum size of steamers exceeded 5,000 tons, the South West India Docks, when completely equipped, remained a popular dock for the Colonial and India trades, but with the opening of the Royal Albert Dock in 1880 capable of taking 12,000 tons and the employment of steamers exceeding 5,000 tons, the fortunes of the dock began to fail. One after another the lines left the South West India Dock for the Royal Albert Dock. The 55 feet lock had ruined the possibility of any extension of its short career as the premier dock in the Port.

Turning to other developments the new régime found many openings for useful works. There was only one entrance to the East India Dock and that one was 48 feet wide and designed for the admission of sailing ships. Under Colonel du Plat Taylor's advice an additional entrance was made 65 feet wide and 31 feet deep at spring tides, whilst the basin was rebuilt with two spacious quays capable of receiving vessels of 8,000 tons.

In 1873 at the instigation of the largest wool importers the company erected warehouses at the South West India Dock specially constructed for the showing of wool for sale, and by the superior showing facilities afforded and reductions of rates, a considerable amount of business was diverted to these warehouses from the London and St. Katharine Docks. This wool business remained at the South West India Dock till 1887 when it returned to its original home attracted back by the later improvements in the facilities there, and the growing reluctance of buyers to go so far afield to inspect wool offered for sale.

Another work carried out of great value was the application of machinery to the manipulation of mahogany and teak in the docks. The timber sheds were entirely rebuilt, fitted with gantries, travelling cranes and other mechanical appliances intended to facilitate the handling of heavy logs, weighing sometimes three tons in weight, and to conduct the operation more cheaply and with less risk to life and limb. The whole of the hydraulic machinery throughout

the docks was overhauled, increased in power, and generally brought up to the highest standard of efficiency.

Such rail traffic as had entered the dock premises had been hauled by horse power, partly because the company's railways had not been made to receive locomotives, and partly because of the supposed danger from fire to the buildings and their contents in the docks. The deficiencies in respect of the company's railways were remedied, and successful negotiations with the insurance companies removed their ban on the admission of locomotives which were thereupon used both for the haulage of goods and the passenger trains running through the West India Dock to North Greenwich.

Many other matters might be mentioned, but enough has been said to prove that the achievements of Colonel du Plat Taylor entitle him to be considered as a notable reformer of dock methods and administration. He intended the Tilbury Dock to be his chief contribution to the advancement of his company. That it brought a host of misfortunes instead of prosperity was due to several causes, some of them entirely beyond his control. So far as he was responsible it was due to some extent to his own judgment in the design being overborne by the company's engineer who promoted and designed the dock, to over sanguine expectations of its attractions to shipowners, and to a loyal acquiescence in the fatal financial policy adopted by the board at the instigation of its chairman.

Business men often take short views and the catastrophe which followed upon the opening of the dock undeservedly overshadowed the fine work Colonel du Plat Taylor had done for the Port for sixteen years. He lived long enough to see the day when every berth at Tilbury Dock was occupied and the revenue from it yielding an adequate return on the capital invested.

Mention may be made here of a misfortune of a kind without precedent, in the destruction of the south quay of the East India Import Dock in 1879. Without warning a length of 700 feet of the quay wall sank three feet, later in the day developing into a length of 1,050 feet, with a maximum depth of 5 feet 6 inches, and wrecking the shed and cranes upon the quay. The cause of the collapse of the quay was never traced. One theory was that a stream of



running sand which five days previously had given trouble at the adjacent Poplar Dock works of the Midland Railway Company had undermined the foundations of the quay wall. Another was that the dredging of the dock had been carried too near the edge of the quay. The accident cost £50,000 to repair, and represents the worst disaster to works known in London dock history. When we consider the length of the period the docks have been in existence, the immense area covered by the premises, and the hazardous nature of many of the operations carried on, some credit must be given to the care and ability with which the generations of dock officials and servants have played their part in the construction and operation of the works.

## CHAPTER XXII

# The Surrey Dock System subsequent to 1864

THE history of this system for the half century subsequent to the amalgamation of 1864 is one of steady progress. The directors were always members of the grain and timber trades and devoted themselves wholly to the cultivation of those trades in the docks. By their influence they were able to bring large business to the docks which were thus entirely independent of the competition which harassed the other companies. By their own knowledge of the requirements of the trades committed to them the directors were able to avoid the mistakes made by the other companies where the business carried on was so complex in character that even large unwieldy boards left some trades unrepresented. A company that was managed by its own customers was scarcely likely to offend its customers, whilst the proprietors were kept in good humour by the regular payment of dividends of about 6 per cent. Nor was the general contentment merely that of pleasant drifting. The company maintained a lively touch with the changed conditions and requirements of the trades with which they were concerned, and persistently endeavoured to meet the demands for improved accommodation and facilities. The dock system was greatly altered and extended. The Canada Dock of 16 acres was opened in November, 1876. Four grain warehouses holding 35,000 tons were built. The demand for under cover accommodation for wood was met by the erection of twenty-three blocks of sheds covering an area of 46 acres, and having a storage capacity of 203,000 loads. On these works about £500,000 was spent.

By the year 1893 the directors had to face the same question as had been forced upon the London and St. Katharine Dock Company in 1874 and the East and West Company in 1881, viz., that of the inability of their system of docks to receive the larger modern shipping







VIEW OF THE GRAND SURREY DOCKS CANAL



ENTRANCE TO SURREY CANAL FROM THAMES



ENTRANCE TO THE COMMERCIAL DOCKS—ROTHERHITHE

*From unpublished water-colours by G. Yates, 1825* p. 220



employed in commerce. Vessels in the timber trade had been the last to become subject to the movement in favour of bigger ships. A large proportion of the vessels employed were Norwegian wooden vessels. Discarded smaller steamers from other trades were retained for the timber trade as suitable for the Norwegian and Baltic ports which were not so accessible to large steamers. But now timber, though, not employing the very largest class of modern steamship was gradually being carried in large vessels, even up to 7,000 or 8,000 tons gross, and consignments of timber were coming as part cargoes in almost the largest class of steamer from North America. In these circumstances the Surrey Commercial board decided to construct a new dock partly on the site of the old Greenland dock (described above as the first dock of any importance to be made in the Port) with an entrance lock of such dimensions as would afford ample accommodation for the largest class of vessel likely to resort to the Surrey Docks.

The original plans for the Greenland Dock were prepared by the engineer of the company, Mr. J. A. Maconnachie, who died before any substantial progress with the works had been made. The company then decided to secure the advice of the highest engineering authority and entrusted the supervision and control of the works to Sir John Wolfe Barry. Under his advice, modifications were made in the plans, increasing the width of the dock by 100 feet and the length and depth of the entrance lock. In order to carry on the current work and to avoid closing the canal the contract was let in two sections, the western end of the dock being finished first. This naturally lengthened the time required, whilst delays due to this cause were accentuated by special difficulties met with in carrying out the work. Sir John Wolfe Barry averred that he had seldom been engaged on a work that gave him so much anxiety. Thanet sand was encountered in places where, according to most careful borings taken, it could not exist, and this sand endangered the whole of the river end of the dock. Holes appeared in the foreshore and in a few moments the trenches that were almost ready to receive the foundations were filled with extremely fine sand, and communication was established between the river and the works. The position threatened to be a grave one and disaster was only averted by costly

measures adopted by the engineer. By reason of these circumstances the dock was not opened until 1904, ten years after the passing of the Act of Parliament authorizing it. The ceremony of reopening this dock, the first and the last to be constructed by private companies, was in marked contrast to that of the docks made at the beginning of the eighteenth century. The directors, with a few of those who had been intimately associated in the execution of the enterprise, entered the lock in a tug. Across the entrance to the lock a riband was suspended, at the centre of which was a large bouquet of flowers. The chairman from the head of the tug cut the ribbon, and withdrew the bouquet amidst the applause of the spectators. The tug then entered the dock and returned to the entrance after a circuit of the whole dock system.

A luncheon at one of the offices had preceded the ceremony. The congratulations on the completion of the anxious work were tempered by the gloom at the thoughts of the impending end of directorial management in view of the Government Bill then before the House of Commons, a gloom which was premature as it was not till five years afterwards that Parliament placed the control of the docks in the hands of the Port of London Authority. The matter of fact toast list is given here as a contrast with that when the foundation stone of the West India Dock was laid in 1800 :—

1. The King.
2. Prosperity to the Surrey Commercial Dock Company and the new dock.
3. The Consulting Engineer, Sir John Wolfe Barry.
4. The Contractors.
5. The Chairman.

The dock as completed is 2,250 feet long by 450 feet broad covering an area of 22 acres. The lock is 550 feet long and 80 feet broad, the same length and breadth as the Albert Dock locks, and with a depth at high water spring, of  $35\frac{1}{4}$  feet. The situation of the new dock in regard to the Surrey Canal and the other docks to be approached from it necessitated the making of five passages into it, with the consequence that on no side is there continuous quay line for more than 800 feet, a factor which leads to an uneconomical use of the quay frontage when contrasted with



the long uninterrupted line of quay such as exists at the West India system or at the Royal Albert Dock.

No pumping machinery for maintaining the full depth of water in the dock was provided so that the depth of 31½ feet at high water given on the maps is subject to a deduction of about 4 feet at neap tides in addition to losses of water by leakage, evaporation and undocking of vessels at other times than high water.

The total cost of the new dock was £940,000. The main purpose of constructing the dock had, as already stated, been to make the Surrey Dock system accessible to the largest ships carrying the class of timber dealt with there. By the entrance to the new Greenland Dock, vessels could proceed to the whole of the docks in the system, thus in particular opening the Canada and Albion Docks to vessels of a size that could not enter through the old Surrey Lock higher up the river, and moreover providing an alternative entrance to the whole system in case of obstruction at the Surrey Lock, which was the only other means of entrance into the Canada and Albion Docks. The very largest class of timber vessels were intended to be accommodated in the new Greenland Dock itself. But in the meantime the timber trade in London had not developed as rapidly as had been anticipated from past experience, and the directors acutely pressed by the fact that the dock had cost considerably more than the estimated sum turned to other businesses than timber and grain to maintain their financial position. The dock was less than two miles from Tooley Street, the centre of the provision trade, and having regard to the advantage of provision ships discharging as near the market as possible, two of the Canadian lines running to London were approached by the company and were induced in 1906 to leave their berths in the Victoria Dock for the Greenland Dock, on the undertaking that suitable cool storage for cheese and other provisions were provided in addition to the ordinary transit facilities. This transfer of business was not relished by the London and India Docks Company, and fearing that the two Canadian lines might be followed by American lines they started reprisals by offering to take soft wood timber at rates 25 per cent. less than those in force at the Surrey Docks. The Surrey Company maintained their rates, preferring this even with the ensuing

loss of some of their timber business belonging to customers who had been critics of the directors and who welcomed the opportunity of exercising pressure upon them. The struggle was never a keen one. In view of the legislation for purchase hanging over all the companies at that time any war to the knife would have been suicidal, and a truce was tacitly agreed to on the basis of the retention of captured business by each of the parties until the amalgamation of all the dock undertakings under the Port of London Act became an accomplished fact.



## CHAPTER XXIII

# The Millwall Dock Company

THIS company was incorporated by an Act passed in the year 1864 under the title of the Millwall Canal Company, and its capital consisted at first of £510,000 in 25,500 shares of £20 each, with borrowing powers to the extent of £170,000. The company's name was at once changed to the Millwall Freehold Land and Dock Company. Sir James D. H. Elphinstone, Bart., was the first chairman, but he was soon succeeded by Mr. A. S. Ayrton, M.P. The company purchased some 200 acres of freehold marsh land in the Isle of Dogs to the south of the West India Dock system and obtained the power of constructing docks and basins upon it. It was hoped that the land adjacent to the quays, by having access to water frontage, would become valuable for factories, shipbuilding yards, and similar purposes, so that the rents of the surplus lands might form a large portion of the company's revenue. This idea of utilizing dock land had not been applied to the older dock systems on the north side of the Thames, where the lands acquired were not more than could be profitably retained for ordinary dock purposes. At the Victoria Dock, attempts had been made to combine the two purposes, but that dock was rather far from London, and involved a long cartage. The Millwall scheme had, therefore, more chance of success. The dock was commenced in June, 1865. Mr. John Fowler was the engineer, with Mr. William Wilson as his colleague. The works were executed by Messrs. Kelk & Aird and were opened for business on the 14th March, 1868. When completed, there was a water area of 36 acres. The length of the entrance lock was 450 feet and the width 80 feet, with a depth at high water springs of 28 feet. Inside the dock the depth was also 28 feet. The dock is to-day as it was completed. Unfortunately, the width of the dock is not sufficient to make it worth while deepening, as in order to do so the false quay which would have to be built out into the dock to enable dredging to be done safely, would encroach so much upon the water space

as to leave no room for operations to be carried on. The dock was built shaped like an inverted "L," with the entrance on the west side of the Isle of Dogs. The promoters of the scheme projected another outlet into the river on the east side of the island, but circumstances never permitted this extension being made, and now that the Port Authority has decided to couple up the Millwall and West India systems, this outlet is never likely to be made, though an enlargement of the dock may one day be made on the land bought for the purpose. The completed scheme included a dry dock 413 feet long—the first dry dock to be constructed by a Dock Company in London. The railway system with which this dock was subsequently furnished was far more comprehensive than that of any other docks in London. The construction of the dock was the occasion of the first passenger railway service through a London dock. A branch line from the Blackwall Railway was made through the West India Dock to a point in the Isle of Dogs opposite Greenwich, which served to connect the Millwall Docks with London, and also brought the whole of the West India Docks in connexion with the railway systems of the country. For some years the passenger trains were hauled by horses.

The Millwall Company was never a financial success. It attracted a large quantity of business—chiefly grain from the Baltic—but the rates charged were so low as to make it unremunerative. The policy was to get business rather than to make profits. Its attempts to capture soft wood business from the Surrey Docks met with little success, in spite of lower rates and exceedingly good rail facilities. It was a continual thorn in the sides of the other companies, without any benefit to itself.

A crisis arose in the affairs of the company in 1898, when it was discovered that by falsification of accounts by the manager the company's profits had been swollen by a total sum of £230,000 spread over several years, and dividends paid accordingly in excess of what was properly distributable. The Board was reorganized by an Act passed in 1899, which also legalized the dividends paid, and allowed the necessary adjustment of accounts, and gave certain facilities for borrowing. Mr. John Trotter became the new chairman, while Mr. Frederic Duckham, the engineer, was appointed





MILLWALL DOCK CENTRAL GRANARY





general manager of the company. The funds required for the new central granary and other works were obtained by the promotion of a subsidiary company—the Millwall Equipment Company. The granary is still the finest in the Port, accommodating 100,000 quarters. Mr. Duckham's valuable inventions for discharging and handling grain are known to all dock managers and engineers, and have contributed greatly to economy and efficiency in this important business.

## CHAPTER XXIV

# Royal Albert Dock

**I**N 1874 the London and St. Katharine's Company judged that the time had arrived when the original project of extending the Victoria Dock eastward to Galleons Reach could be carried out. The need for such an extension was felt chiefly owing to the Victoria Dock not providing sufficient depth of water for the larger ships then coming into use, and it was also desired to save such vessels the four miles' voyage between Galleons and the entrance to the Victoria Dock. The design of the new dock was substantially identical with that which was authorized by the Victoria Dock Act of 1853, the only variation being that the line of the dock walls was a straight one instead of being broken by three bays on each side. The Act of Parliament authorizing the dock was passed in 1875, and as it raised no vexed question there was no difficulty in securing it. The chief difficulty was in connexion with the Great Eastern Railway to North Woolwich which ran across the estate and had to be carried through a tunnel made under the canal where the junction of the Victoria Dock and the new dock was to be situated. A swing bridge for the road traffic and the dock rail traffic had to be constructed across the canal.

The dock was designed by Mr. Alexander Rendel (afterwards Sir Alexander Rendel) who survived the opening of the dock for thirty-eight years. The contract was entrusted to Messrs. Lucas & Aird, and the dock was opened by H.R.H. the Duke of Connaught on behalf of Queen Victoria on the 24th June, 1880. Mr. George H. Chambers, the chairman of the company, was knighted on the occasion.

At the time of its opening the dock was the finest in the world and it remains to-day one of the most imposing works of its kind. It is about  $1\frac{3}{4}$  miles long, measuring from the junction with the Victoria Dock to the pier head where the Albert Basin joins the river at Galleons, and there is a total water area of 87 acres. The depth of water on the opening of the dock was 27 feet in the main dock and 32 feet



in the basin, and this depth was maintained during all tides by pumping from the river. The entrance lock was 550 feet in length, 80 feet wide, and 30 feet in depth at spring tides. The Tilbury Dock scheme was launched soon after the dock was finished, and as it was designed to offer a greater depth of water than the Albert Dock, the London and St. Katharine's Company decided to make a second and deeper entrance, the depth being 36 feet as against 38 feet at Tilbury. This new entrance was completed in time for competition with the Tilbury Dock when it was opened in 1886. Two graving docks were constructed in connexion with the Royal Albert Dock.

With the opening of the Royal Albert Dock the sister Victoria Dock appropriately had the prefix "Royal" added to its name.

The cost of the Royal Albert Dock was about £2,200,000, one of the cheapest docks on the Thames considering the class of the accommodation provided and its substantial character. The cheapness of cost was chiefly due to the presence of gravel on the site for making concrete, and to no unexpected difficulties being met with.

The addition of 16,500 lineal feet of new quayage to the accommodation of the Port was a notable one, but though trade was increasing it could not absorb the extra accommodation quickly. The Albert Dock was at first occupied largely at the expense of the Victoria Dock, while it denuded the South West India Dock of the small amount of steam shipping that had remained there. The additional interest charges thrown upon the income of the London Company reduced the dividend of the ordinary stock holders from 3 per cent. to 2 per cent. This magnificent dock was, therefore, made entirely at the cost of the shareholders of the company for many years afterwards. By provoking the East and West India Company to build the Tilbury Dock it was the cause of financial misfortune to both companies, though to the advantage of shipowners and traders of the Port both in choice of accommodation and in the charges for its use.

Some idea of the operations involved in the making of a modern dock in 1875 may be derived from the following facts and figures mentioned in the book issued by the dock company at the time the dock was opened. Upwards of

4,000,000 cubic yards of excavation were necessary and lifted a mean height of 17 feet. The lifting was performed by steam power excavating machinery. Three steam navvies each capable of moving from 450 to 500 cubic yards per day, a steam land dredger and steam grabs, 600 to 700 earth waggons, and 18 locomotives were constantly employed, together with 70 steam cranes and engines of various kinds. The maximum daily amount of water pumped from the work was estimated at 43,000,000 gallons. 500,000 cubic yards of concrete requiring 80,000 tons of Portland cement, together with 20,000,000 bricks, were used, and between 2,000 and 3,000 workmen found daily employment on the works.

The Royal Albert Dock was one of the first large public undertakings to be lighted throughout by electric light. It was anticipated that "at no time would the light be less than that of a fine moonlight night."

At the time of the opening of the dock, the largest vessel regularly coming to the Port of London was the *Queen* of the National Line with a gross tonnage of 4,457 tons. The new dock was made capable of receiving vessels up to 12,000 tons gross tonnage, and up to 1903 was able to receive all vessels desiring to discharge at the dock. By 1903 the Royal Albert and Tilbury Docks were under the same management and the larger liners then offering were accommodated at Tilbury without dispute, but so well had the general plans of the Royal Albert Dock been laid that it would have been practicable had the company so desired by reconstructing one of the two Galleons entrances and deepening the dock to make provision for vessels up to 20,000 to 25,000 tons.

This extension of the dock system was the occasion for the dock company having its own goods station in London instead of depending upon the services of the Great Eastern railway in their town depôts. This station which is still used is in East Smithfield at the end of a small branch line of the Great Eastern Railway near Leman Street and is leased from them. The actual terminus is in a warehouse on the north side of the London Dock, one of the original purposes of the station being to facilitate the transit of goods by rail intended for warehousing at the London Docks. This facility has, however, fallen into disuse, and the station is



now employed chiefly as a dépôt for receiving goods from road conveyances for despatch by rail to vessels loading in the Albert and Victoria Docks, and for the delivery in town of tobacco housed in the Victoria Dock.

## CHAPTER XXV

# The Tilbury Dock

**A**T the end of the seventh decade of the last century the fortunes of the East and West India Dock Company began to flag. Dividends of 7 per cent. paid for many years, partially out of reserves, were reduced to 6 per cent., then to 5 per cent., and to  $4\frac{1}{2}$  per cent. for 1880.

The diminution in the Company's prosperity was attributable partly to the diversion of Eastern produce to Mediterranean Ports by the opening of the Suez Canal in 1869, partly to changes in the character of its warehousing business brought about by the completion of ocean cables, which led to smaller stocks of produce in London, and partly to the increasing competition of wharfingers for the smaller warehousing business due to these two causes. The volume of shipping coming into the Port continued to increase year by year, but the East and West India Dock system did not benefit as it was not sufficiently modernized to deal with the growing size of steamships. The southernmost of three parallel docks of the West India system had been enlarged, deepened, and quayed in 1870, and, under the name of the South West India Dock, offered virtually new space of 29 acres of water ; but the entrance lock, with a width of 45 feet, was not widened when the improvement scheme was carried out. It is incredible that such a limitation of width could have been allowed to remain in a dock designed to receive modern steamers, when the Victoria Dock, opened fifteen years before, was furnished with an entrance 80 feet wide, while its immediate neighbour, the Millwall Dock, also had an 80 feet entrance. The expenditure of £500,000 on the dock itself was made fruitless merely because the directors would not spend £50,000 on a new entrance. The West India Import and Export Docks were approached by the original entrance designed in 1799, where the width was 45 feet, curving down in basin form to the bottom, a shape suitable for the old sailing ships, but not for the tank type of the modern steamer. The only entrance of the Company which had any claim to modern





THE ROYAL EXCHANGE, 1788  
From an engraving by BARTOLOZZI





design was that opened in 1879 at the East India Dock basin, and this only gave access to two berths. The most serious threat to the prosperity of the Company was the opening of the Royal Albert Dock in June, 1880. The chief Australian line which was using the East India Dock basin was on the point of transferring its steamers to the new dock, and other lines were wavering. Promoters were in Parliament in the session of 1880 asking for powers to build a new dock at Dagenham, and obtained them. The directors of the East and West India Company therefore began to realize that the position must worsen unless the question of accommodating larger vessels was resolutely dealt with. They therefore considered the only two alternatives, viz., whether the existing docks should be improved, or whether an entirely new system should be constructed below the Royal Albert Dock.

The factor in favour of modernizing the West India Docks was that by the spaciousness of the original design they lent themselves to reconstruction. No land need be bought, the capital expenditure would certainly be far less, the docks were only three miles from London, and therefore delivery and shipment of cargoes were cheap for the merchant. The objections were that the greater part of the docks would have to be closed to shipping for two or three years, that business once lost is not easily regained, and that though the West India Docks might suit the merchant, the shipowner would prefer to avoid the narrower and more winding stream in the upper reaches. Nor could reconstructed docks at Blackwall hope to attract the very largest class of liners likely to come to the Port.

The directors decided to adopt the second alternative, and took the bold step of accepting a scheme for docks at Tilbury which was submitted to them by Mr. Augustus Manning, their engineer, and Mr. F. C. Ahlfeldt, their railway manager. Mr. Harry Dobree, a member of an old West Indian firm, who had just been appointed chairman of the Board, enthusiastically took the lead in this enterprise. The land required was obtained by means of options secured by secret agents before the scheme was public. In the autumn of 1881 the proprietors were asked to sanction a Bill for the purpose of carrying out the dock, and though there was criticism from a few shareholders—unfortunately,

too, justified in the result—Mr. Dobree was able to get his resolutions carried by a large majority. The opposition in Parliament was confined to the promoters of the Dagenham Dock, who saw that their project had no chance of being financed if the Tilbury scheme were carried out. It was never probable, however, that Parliament would prevent an old-established company, brought into being by Parliament itself, from maintaining its position in order to assist private promoters, and the Bill received the Royal Assent on the 3rd July, 1882. The Act incorporated most of the provisions of the recent Dock Extension Acts, and only two points call for special note: first, that the maximum dock dues of 1s. 6d. per ton for the use of the dock were fixed by the Act, and, secondly, that the Harbours, Docks, and Piers Clauses Act were incorporated, so far as Tilbury Dock was concerned, leaving the East and West India Docks subject to their own special privileged legislation.

So eager were the directors to proceed with the new works that a contract was provisionally made for the main works while the Bill was in Committee, and the first turf was cut by Mr. Dobree five days after the Bill received the Royal Assent.

The site chosen for the dock was an area of marsh lands about 450 acres in extent, immediately adjoining the Tilbury Station of the London, Tilbury and Southend Railway. The area of dock water proposed was 56 acres, entered from a tidal basin of 19 acres. There were several new features in the dock scheme. The tidal basin was to be an open one. On its western side was erected a jetty where coal could be discharged from colliers into barges for bunkering ships. The two graving docks were so placed as to be available for emergency communications between the basin and the dock in case the lock was obstructed. An extra caisson was provided for each of the graving docks which and this could be so moved into slots in the walls as to make four graving docks if required. The arrangement of the wet dock was that of a main dock with three branch docks instead of long lines of quay, such as had characterized the earliest and latest of dock schemes in London up to that time. The lower part of the cranes was so shaped that railway trucks could run under them. As there was no house property in



the neighbourhood, large blocks of dwellings and several officers' houses had to be built.

It may be said at once that some of these novelties did not turn out to be successes. The tidal basin became a mud trap, as some witnesses had told the Parliamentary Committee that it would be. The alternative entrances provided by the graving docks have fortunately not been required so far, but the conditions under which they could be so used make the alternative a practically impossible one. The branch dock idea tends to centralization which is useful, but the branches were made too narrow, viz., varying from 200 to 300 feet. This width serves in the Alexandra Dock at Liverpool, from which the idea was copied, but the barge traffic there is negligible. The coaling jetty was only used on a few occasions and then removed, and the cost of maintaining the channel clear of mud is still very heavy.

The lock was made 700 feet long and 80 feet wide. The graving docks were 700 feet long, one being 80 feet in width and the other 70 feet.

Round the branch docks there were erected twenty-four sheds each 300 feet by 120 feet, with an interval of 100 feet between them. The tidal basin was quayed on its eastern side and two sheds erected there. A large hotel was erected between the river and the basin, it being anticipated that steamers from the Colonies would land their passengers at the landing stage in the basin on their way into the dock, and that friends of the passengers would stay at the hotel when meeting them. The two basin sheds were intended for transhipment trade, the expectation being that coasting or near Continental steamers would call for goods removed there from ocean-going steamers discharging in the dock.

The railway arrangements were on a most comprehensive scale, there being fifty miles of railway sidings accessible to the front and back of every berth in the dock. By negotiation with the railway companies, the Dock Company had secured the benefit of the London group rate for merchants and traders wishing to send goods to and from the docks and country stations. In other words, it would cost no more for goods to be sent by rail from Birmingham to ships in Tilbury Dock than to any of the existing docks.

The London, Tilbury, and Southend Railway undertook to carry goods to and from a new dépôt in Whitechapel (now known as the Commercial Road Dépôt), and to lease to the Dock Company a large warehouse to be built over the dépôt for goods landed at the docks and requiring warehouse accommodation. The Railway Company also promised a half-hourly service of passenger trains during business hours to perform the journey in thirty-five minutes. The Railway Company conceded a rate of 4s. 6d. a ton for the conveyance of goods between the dépôt and Tilbury, but a guarantee of 200,000 tons of traffic from the date of opening detracted from the benefit of the low rate.

The outstanding advantage upon which the board of the East and West India Dock Company relied was, however, that in being situated opposite Gravesend, the dock was at the well-established point of arrival and departure of all vessels trading with London at a position on the river up to which the largest vessels could navigate at all states of the tide. With a depth of water never less than 26 feet in the basin and 33 feet in the docks, vessels could enter the dock at any time without reference to the state of the tide and without incurring the delay incidental to anchoring at Gravesend to wait for the flood tide to enable them to proceed higher up the river. Besides often saving a day through this facility, the expense of river towage and pilotage would be saved, and the risks of the narrower river navigation above Tilbury would be abolished altogether.

Realizing that there was a merchants' question involved as well as a shipowners' the Company supplemented the rail facilities by arranging with lighterage contractors now represented by the Tilbury Contracting Company of London for the provision of an adequate lighterage service between Tilbury and London.

The estimate for the land and works was £1,100,000, and having regard to the extent of the scheme, it was held out as being the most cheaply constructed dock in the Port. On the question of the return, it was sanguinely forecasted that twenty of the working berths would be constantly occupied from the opening of the dock without affecting the business at the existing docks, and that this would give 11 per cent. on the capital outlay. The framers



of this estimate concluded, that, from the day of opening, every vessel then using the Royal Albert Dock would steam into Tilbury, that no competitive weapon such as reduced rates would be used by the owners of the deserted Albert Dock, and that none of the merchant interests—some of which would be inconvenienced—would take any step to prevent vessels discharging their cargoes at Tilbury.

Up to the moment when the first turf was cut on the 8th July, 1882, the enterprise had been conducted with remarkable ability and success. From that moment, though there was much energy shown in completing the dock, the scheme was overshadowed by misfortune after misfortune, and finally there came disillusionment and disaster.

The promotion of the scheme was mixed with motives not purely commercial. Considerable envy had been excited in the minds of the East and West India Board by the fact that the London and St. Katharine Company possessed the finest dock in the world, with every prospect of filling it out of the increased trade coming to the Port, and even out of the reduced trade that was left to the East and West India Docks. Not a little of this temper of mind had survived from the breach between the original promoters of the West India Dock and London Dock in 1799, and it had not been ameliorated by the failure of negotiations for amalgamation which were opened while the Albert Dock was in progress.

Let us, however, recite the events which led up to the ultimate disaster.

The contract for the main works was let to Messrs. Kirk & Randall at a price which was reported to be within the estimates of Mr. Manning, who was with Mr. Donald Baynes (now Sir Donald Baynes, Bart.), appointed as engineer for the contract. The work did not progress as fast as the engineers required, and on its being represented by the contractors that they could go faster if further plant were brought on the site, the company advanced large sums for this purpose. The contractors still not satisfying the engineers, alleged that the nature of the ground was different from what was represented to them when tendering (some of it was a blue clay over peat strata, termed "mud" by the contractors), and claimed that it was "other description of work," under the contract, and

that they were entitled to extra prices. Dispute followed dispute, and consequential delays. The situation became impossible, and, on legal advice, the contractors were ejected from the works in July, 1884. For a few months the Company proceeded with the constructional works with their own staff, and then entrusted the completion of the work to Messrs. Lucas & Aird. In their hands operations went on rapidly, and the formal opening of the dock for business took place on the 17th April, 1886. The ceremony consisted of the steamer *Glenfruin*, from China, belonging to Messrs. McGregor, Gow & Co., breaking a riband stretched across the dock gates as she entered the dock. After the ceremony Mr. Dobree presided at a luncheon given at the new hotel adjoining the dock, the guests being the Lord Mayor, several shipowners, and those immediately associated with the work. The occasion was noteworthy by reason of a speech made by Sir Donald Currie, in which he suggested that in order to promote general harmony of management, and to prevent undue competition, a dock trust similar to that which existed on the Mersey should be established for London. He said such a trust need not be inimical to the interests of the public, as great economy of management and outlay might be effected, by which the public would really be benefited. The Lord Mayor promised his co-operation if such a movement were initiated. Mr. Dobree agreed with the suggestion, saying with forebodings of what was in store for the company that, no doubt, monopolies were dangerous, but competition was sometimes ruinous to all who were engaged in it. Though the ideal of Sir Donald Currie was twenty-three years in maturing into actuality, the construction of the Tilbury Dock was the first link in the chain of events which resulted in the constitution of a public body for the management of the Port and Docks.

Meanwhile Messrs. Kirk & Randall had commenced proceedings against the company for the enforcement of claims amounting in the aggregate to upwards of £600,000. These claims were met by counterclaims by the Company. The questions involved were referred to Sir Frederick Bramwell, as arbitrator; Mr. Webster (afterwards Lord Alverstone), and Mr. C. A. Cripps (now Lord Parmoor),



were counsel for the contractors ; while Sir Henry James (Lord James of Hereford), Mr. Kenelm Digby and Mr. E. H. Pollard represented the Dock Company. The proceedings were long and costly. In the middle of the arbitration proceedings, the Company raised the question whether the Arbitrator was receiving evidence not germane to the claim, and went to the Courts, ultimately succeeding in getting a judgment from the House of Lords reversing the decision of the Divisional Court and the Court of Appeal, and directing the Arbitrator to state his awards in the form of a special case for the opinion of the Courts. In the Autumn of 1888, Sir Frederick Bramwell made his awards, the effect of which was that in one alternative the company were indebted to the contractors to the extent of £165,164, and in another alternative only £44,550, and further that the Company had not been justified in turning the contractors out of the works and were liable for damages to be ascertained. Each award gave the costs of the reference against the Company. The Directors were advised that the awards were bad and contested them. After five years of litigation a settlement was arrived at under which both parties withdrew their claims and the contractors received £180,000 in securities, the value of which then was only 24 per cent. of the nominal value. An estimate made at the time showed that the cost to the Company of the arbitration including the sums of about £200,000 advanced for plant which were given up by the settlement was about £400,000. This makes no allowance for the much higher prices paid to Messrs. Lucas & Aird. When the capital account of the dock was finally closed in 1892 the total cost of the dock including interest during construction (which had not been allowed for in the original estimate), was found to exceed £2,800,000, as against the estimate of £1,100,000.

The troubles arising from the differences with the contractors may possibly be held to have been pure misfortune, but those which ensued connected with the financing of the docks can only be attributed to neglect of the first principles of prudent management. The financial methods pursued by the Directors invited disaster. The Company up to 1881 had found finance easy, because it had borrowed sparingly, and had paid out of revenue for new properties and new works to the extent of £2,000,000. It also had liquid reserves

in the shape of investments in railway stocks and valuable lands not necessary for the undertaking. At the beginning of 1882, its capital stock amounted to £2,385,500, and its borrowed capital to £600,000. There was no preference stock. The market value of the ordinary stock had depreciated to a little below par and it was a defensible policy not to have made a fresh issue of ordinary stock. The circumstances, therefore, pointed to building the dock by an issue of preference stock, but the board, while taking powers to create ordinary preference and debentures, only issued the debenture securities and continued to do so until no further borrowing powers could be obtained. Then they sold all their investments and outlying properties, and finally borrowed large sums from bankers on the security of the preference stock, and the proceeds of their town warehouses, which they contemplated selling. The position of the capital account of the Company when the dock was completed, was as follows :—

Capital stock .. .. .	£2,385,500
Debenture stock .. .. .	1,906,000
Terminable mortgages .. .. .	764,400
Borrowed on securities.. .. .	625,337
Unsecured creditors (about) .. .. .	300,000
	<hr/>
	£5,981,237

There is no modern precedent for a company in a sound state obtaining from Parliament powers so obviously dangerous to the preservation of a stable financial position. The only explanation given for such a departure from Parliamentary policy in this case is that Lord Redesdale, then Chairman of the House of Lords Committee, was persuaded by the Company's representative that before the pressure of the borrowed capital could be felt, sufficient monies would be realized by the disposal of the town property, and the sale of lands at Tilbury, to Railway Companies, to provide funds for paying off the whole of the terminable mortgages. The defence of the directors was that they counted upon an instant and abounding success, and that if this had been achieved, the lighter charges on the income of the Company, for interest, would have brought higher dividends to the proprietors.



The dock being opened for business, it remained to the directors to fill it, but unfortunately the business did not appear. Between April and August, 1886, the only trade offering was a line of small German steamers running to Central America once a month, and a few other vessels which were bribed by nominal rates to use the dock. By August it was clear that the owners of the liners at the Albert Dock were either unable to come to the dock which they had backed when the Bill was before Parliament, or were waiting for inducements. In fairness to the ship-owners it must be said that many consignees had, at the instigation of the London and St. Katharine Docks Company, insisted upon the insertion of clauses in their bills of lading debarring vessels discharging in the Tilbury Dock. The master lightermen objected to go to Tilbury on the ground that their craft had not been built to navigate so far down the river, and they either refused to go there, or demanded higher rates. The wharfingers, as a consequence of the attitude of the lightermen, also boycotted the dock. In August, one line, the Clan Line, which had formerly used the South West India Dock, was persuaded to defy the opposition and transfer its business from the Albert Dock to Tilbury, the inducement being a ten years' agreement at half rates. The example of the Clan Line was followed by the Anchor Line, also trading to the East, the Atlantic Transport Company's Line to America, the Orient Line to Australia, and three smaller lines. All these lines were given large reductions of charges with agreements for terms of years. It was estimated that the tonnage secured in the first twelve months represented an annual business of 500,000 tons for the dock, but though the arrangements provided an efficient service to the shipowner, the rates charged were ruinous, and the working of the dock was carried on at a loss. The competition to fill Tilbury soon extended to other areas in the Port. The London and St. Katharine Company had to reduce their Albert and Victoria rates in order to retain the rest of their business, and this led to lower rates at the upper dock systems of the two companies. The effects were seen in the accounts of the two companies for 1887. The London and St. Katharine Company, which had paid a dividend of 2 per cent. for 1885, paid only 1 per cent. for 1886, and the same in 1887. The case of the East and West

s

India Company was far worse. The earnings for the year 1887 did not cover the working expenses, so that there was not a penny of income provided to meet interest charges of about £140,000, and those charges were only met by borrowing further monies. The crisis came at the beginning of March, 1888, when certain mortgages fell due. The Company were unable to meet them, and by a friendly arrangement with one of them—Mr. Edward Clark, a holder of a £5,000 mortgage—application was made to the High Court of Justice for the appointment of receivers and managers under the Railway Companies Act, 1867. Mr. Justice Chitty granted the application, and appointed Mr. Alexander Lawrie interim receiver on the 5th March. This, though appealed against by the late contractors, Messrs. Kirk & Randall, was confirmed by the Court of Appeal. Three weeks afterwards three receivers and managers were appointed, viz., Sir Henry D. Le Marchant, Bart., Mr. R. A. Hankey, and Mr. Charles Hampden Wigram, all three being directors of the Company. They remained in office until the financial position of the Company was re-established, and were discharged on the 30th June, 1893. At the worst time, the quoted price of the capital stock of the nominal value of £100 descended as low as nine.

It was natural that the proprietors of the two companies were not content to view the exhausting struggle with equanimity. Pressure was brought upon both boards in the early part of 1887 to come to an arrangement either by amalgamation or a working agreement. Negotiations were commenced by members of the board in June, 1887, but yielded no result beyond an agreement to ask two business men of high standing to prepare joint proposals for a fusion of interests. Mr. George Findlay and Mr. Henry Oakley, the then respective general managers of the London and North Western and Great Northern Railways, were asked to undertake this duty and submitted their proposals in a report dated the 27th December, 1887. The London and St. Katharine board declined to accept the terms suggested in the report. In the hope that an independent committee might be able to settle terms more easily than the directors, the proprietors of the East and West India Company asked a committee consisting of four directors, four proprietors,



and four representatives of debenture holders to meet the London and St. Katharine board. Mr. John Coles, one of the debenture representatives, acted as chairman of the committee, and after almost daily meetings spread over a month, the committee were able to report on the 26th March, 1888 (the day before the appointment of the three receivers and managers), that an arrangement had been come to with the board of the London and St. Katharine Docks Company for a working union between the two companies. In anticipation of the negotiations being successful a skeleton Bill had been deposited in Parliament at the end of 1887, and as the arrangements arrived at received the necessary authority from the proprietors of both companies, the Bill was proceeded with in the session of 1888.

## CHAPTER XXVI

# The London and India Docks Joint Committee

THE scheme which had been agreed upon was based upon the report of Messrs. Findlay & Oakley, the chief modification being an alteration in the allocation of profits and the disposal of the outlying properties of the two companies.

The Bill carrying out the agreement involved a new departure in the management of dock undertakings, though the principle had been applied to railways. It provided that the two undertakings should be worked as one from the 1st January, 1889, without any amalgamation of the capital of the companies.

A preliminary step proposed was a reduction in the number of the directors of each company. The boards were unwieldy in numbers, the authorized board of the London and St. Katharine Company being forty-five, and that of the East and West India Company forty. By the Bill it was proposed that not later than the 15th November, 1888, both boards should be reduced to not more than twenty-four members.

For the purpose of the working union a Joint Committee was to be formed to be called "The London and India Docks Joint Committee," consisting of seventeen members, ten from the London Company's board and seven from the India Company's board. This committee was to be entrusted with the management of the joint dock systems, dividing the profits in the following proportion :—

Up to £475,000	..	69 per cent. to the London Company
		31 per cent. to the India Company
On such profits as		
exceed £475,000		50 per cent. to each company

The justification for the increased share to the East and West Company after £475,000 was that they were bringing into the joint undertaking large undeveloped assets at the Tilbury Dock. The increased distribution to the India





INTERIOR OF THE ROYAL EXCHANGE

From an engraving by BARTOLOZZI, 1788





Company was only to be made to the extent that it did not permit that company to pay a higher dividend than the London company.

A standing arbitrator was to be appointed by the Board of Trade to settle differences between the companies.

Certain lands were to be retained by the companies. The London Company had extensive lands to the north and south of the Albert Dock, while at Tilbury, the India Company had an even larger estate reserved for a possible extension of the dock system there. These lands were to remain the property of the individual companies with the condition that they were not to be used for any purpose prejudicial to the joint undertaking.

While the Joint Committee was allowed to raise £300,000 for working capital, no expenditure on capital account was to be incurred without the consent of both companies, and any capital required was to be provided by the company owning the property enlarged or added to, 4 per cent. on such capital sum being paid to the company advancing the money and charged in the joint revenue account. Owing to the inability of the India Company to provide any capital in the early years of the working union a power was subsequently obtained enabling either company to advance money irrespective of the ownership of the property to be improved.

On the question of management, the Bill prescribed that all the powers, authorities, duties and obligations attaching to the two companies or their directors in relation to the following matters should be vested in the Joint Committee :

1. The working, use, maintenance, regulation, and management of the undertakings of the two companies.
2. The fixing, collecting, receiving, and enforcing payment of tolls, rates, and charges.
3. The appointment, remuneration, superannuation, dismissal, and retirement of officers and servants.
4. The erection and providing of works and conveniences.
5. The supply of working plant and rolling stock.

For the first time in any dock Bill the question of protection for the officers and servants of the companies was mentioned, but it was confined merely to the assertion that their rights and obligations were preserved.

The rest of the Bill consisted of the usual transitory

provisions with clauses for dealing with the embarrassing contracts made in connexion with the Tilbury Dock, or arising out of the recent competition. The chief of these contracts were the long term agreements with shipowners made by both companies. The method adopted was that each company was required to endeavour to annul or modify the contracts to the satisfaction of the other company, and if they failed to do so within six months, the joint committee would be entitled to deduct half-yearly such sums out of the share of the net profits of the company as represented the difference between the rates paid by shipowners under such contracts and the rates in the current tariff of the Joint Committee. The London Company were subsequently able to get rid of the agreements with their customers by lump sum payments. The India Company had no funds to devote to such a purpose, and the annual deduction of about £25,000 from their profits was so onerous to them that in 1892 Parliament gave them relief by the power to capitalize the deductions, and this was done until the last agreement expired at the end of 1896.

The Bill was strongly opposed in Committee by the shipowners, who foresaw that the opportunities for playing one company off against the other, which they had enjoyed ever since 1823, would vanish with the proposed fusion of interests. The shipowners did not succeed in defeating the general objects of the Bill, but the committee gave them all the necessary protection from the virtual monopoly which they feared, by three clauses providing as follows :—

1. That the dock dues on vessels throughout the two systems should not exceed the Tilbury maximum of 1s. 6d. per ton.
2. That the rates charged in connexion with the discharge of vessels should be subject to the control of the Railway Commissioners.
3. That no agreement should be made by the Joint Committee for giving preferential rates.

The Royal Assent was given to the Bill on the 7th August, 1888.

In accordance with the provisions of the new Act, meetings took place in the following November for the election of the new board. These meetings did not go



smoothly. The fact was that the proprietors of both companies were dissatisfied with their representatives in having allowed the competition to become ruinous before coming to terms, and demanded new blood in the management. At the London Company's meeting the directors were unable to carry their resolution proposing that the number of the board should be 21, and nominating certain members of the old board. The proprietors would only agree to a board of 15 directors. The result was a scramble for the fewer vacancies. In the case of the India Company there had been an organized attack on the board, commencing when the affairs of the company were placed in the hands of receivers and managers, and continuing for three years afterwards. The attacks included attempts to show that the engineer and railway manager had made illicit profit out of land transactions with the company, and that the directors had illegally pledged the proceeds of sales of their town warehouses. At the meeting for the election of the new board, the retiring India directors with the support of the committee, who had arranged the working union, proposed that the number should be eighteen, that twelve of them should be members of the old board, and that six others should be appointed, viz :—Mr. Edward Boyle, a member of the committee, Mr. T. F. Burnaby Atkins, the largest proprietor of the company, the Hon. Sydney Holland, also a member of the committee, Mr. David Powell, a director of the Bank of England and a former chairman of the dock company, Mr. Edward Wagg, very largely interested as a debenture stockholder, and Colonel J. L. du Plat Taylor, the secretary and general manager of the company. The dissentient proprietors wanted fewer directors and a larger proportion of new blood, and they were in a majority at the meeting. The directors had, however, taken the precaution of obtaining powers in the Act just passed for proprietors to vote by proxy, and having obtained the support of the general body of proprietors by this means were easily able to carry their resolutions. Mr. Dobree presided at the meeting, but did not join the new board. He had been chairman of the company for six years and a half instead of the usual two years, during the most troubled period of its history. He had shown great energy and ability in the early stages of the Tilbury scheme, but owing to

continued ill health his control of affairs gradually got looser, and when the collapse came in March, 1888, he was obliged to leave his colleagues to cope with the financial difficulties which had been largely due to the success of his masterful personality in carrying measures often against criticism at the board.

The first duty of the new boards was to appoint their representatives on the joint committee. The first members of the committee were as follows :—

*Representing the London and St. Katharine Company.*

C. M. NORWOOD, Chairman  
W. E. HUBBARD, Deputy Chairman  
S. E. BATES  
T. L. DEVITT  
N. LUBBOCK  
E. S. NORRIS, M.P.  
A. G. SANDEMAN  
C. J. CATER SCOTT  
SETH TAYLOR

*Representing the East and West India Company.*

R. A. HANKEY, Chairman  
A. LAWRIE, Deputy Chairman  
E. BOYLE  
J. L. DU PLAT TAYLOR  
THE HON. SYDNEY HOLLAND  
SIR H. D. LE MARCHANT, BART.  
J. H. TOD

Mr. Norwood was appointed chairman of the joint committee, and Mr. R. A. Hankey, deputy chairman. Mr. Devitt resigned his directorship directly after his appointment in order that Colonel Martindale, the late general manager of the London Company, might join the board and become a member of the joint committee.

Before proceeding further it may be convenient to complete the story so far as the companies were concerned. After settlement of outstanding liabilities the normal functions left to the companies were those of electing directors, managing their surplus lands, receiving their share of the profits and distributing the profits amongst the various classes of stockholders. The London Company's creditors were easily dealt with, and the capital account was simple.



The position of their capital account was as follows :—

Ordinary Stock	..	..	..	£5,756,697
4½% Preferential	..	..	..	420,000
4½% Preference (1878)	..	..	..	600,000
4½% Preference (1882)	..	..	..	600,000
4% Debenture Stock	..	..	..	1,761,801
Debentures	..	..	..	1,582,318
				<hr/>
				£10,720,816

The company had a reserve fund of £332,949.

In the peculiar circumstances of the fusion there was, however, much more to be done in the case of the India Company. Their entanglements were serious. The receivers and managers were in possession. The income of the year 1888, in spite of the advantages of a truce agreement with the London Company had only been equal to half the accruing liabilities for interest. Mortgages for many thousands of pounds were overdue, and others were falling due from time to time. The litigation with Messrs. Kirk & Randall and other creditors was proceeding. Creditors were disputing with each other the respective priorities of their claims including the validity of the securities held by the bankers.

The Railway Companies Act, 1867, under which the receivership had been appointed, prescribed it as the duty of the directors to bring in a scheme of arrangement with the company's creditors. This was not only the duty, but such an obvious method of disposing of the embarrassments, that immediately the new board was appointed, it set to work on this question. A scheme was filed on the 6th March, 1889, followed by an amended one on the 29th May, in which suggestions made by some of the influential creditors were adopted. Before the scheme could be considered by the High Court of Justice, it required the written assent of three-fourths of each class of creditor. There were several classes of creditors, and as large blocks of the securities were held by trustees naturally averse from taking any step for which they might be held personally responsible, the task of obtaining assents was no light one. Eventually the necessary proportion was obtained, a result secured mainly by the personal efforts of Mr. Sydney Holland. When

the scheme came before the Courts it received the prolonged and strenuous opposition of Messrs. Kirk & Randall and two unsecured creditors, but it was confirmed by the High Court and on appeal, the decision was upheld by the Court of Appeal, and the scheme was duly enrolled on the 1st March, 1890.

The scheme was not a lengthy or complicated one. It was founded on the idea that the developments of trade would sooner or later bring to the company the benefits of the increased percentage of profits prescribed in the Working Union Act as inuring to the company after the joint profits exceeded £475,000.

The scheme of arrangement may be summarized as follows :—

1. Payment of interest on all mortgages, charges, and debenture stock for the eighteen months ended with the 30th June, 1889 (which had been suspended since the Receivership), should not be made, but such interest should be treated as funded interest at the same rate of interest as the principal, and secured on the same security as the principal and bear interest as from the 1st July, 1889.

2. Payment of interest on mortgages, charges, and debenture stock to be resumed as from the 1st July, 1889, but with power to fund during the next ten years for four half-years any accruing interest for which monies were not available.

3. All the available funds in hand on the 30th June, 1889, all outstanding items due to the Company on that date, and the balance of income of any half-year in which interest should be funded to be carried to a reserve fund to be called the "Secured Interest Reserve Fund," to be applicable exclusively for ten years to make up deficiencies in the funds available for the payment of interest on the mortgages, charges, and debenture stocks of the Company. The amount of this fund at its start was £162,807.

4. For the purpose of liquidating debts to unsecured creditors incurred before the receivers and managers were appointed, the Company were empowered to issue deferred debenture stock at par, bearing 4 per cent. interest, and charged on the undertaking, subject to the prior securities. Interest not to be payable except so far as the profits for the half-year should be sufficient to pay the same after providing for the interest on the prior securities. Any balance left, after paying the whole of the interest chargeable on all securities, to be devoted to the payment of arrears on the deferred debenture stock before being available for dividend on the capital stock of the Company.

5. The date of payment of the principal of all mortgages and charges to be postponed for ten years so long as interest was paid or satisfied by funding as provided above. At any time during the ten years the proceeds of any properties charged specifically for



any debt should, in the first instance, be applied to the redemption of the charge, and one-half of the balance should be applied to the purchase at, or below, par, of deferred debenture stock; and the other half to the credit of the Secured Interest Reserve Fund. The same application of funds was laid down in respect of sale moneys of lands not specifically charged.

The income of the Joint Committee in the early years of the working union proved disappointing, and to maintain the payment of interest due on the borrowed capital large sums had to be taken from the secured interest reserve fund to meet deficiencies in the proportion of the income payable to the India Company. By the middle of 1897 it became apparent that the reserve fund would soon disappear altogether, and that the power of again funding interest given to them under the scheme of arrangement would have to be exercised by the board. Such an operation, however desirable to avoid the expense and objections entailed by the reappointment of the receivers and managers, would not only have been inconvenient to the debenture holders, but inimical to the credit of the company. The directors therefore reconsidered the whole of the financial arrangements of the company, and arrived at the decision that it would be better to cut down the fixed charges, which were out of proportion to the total income of any company aiming at a sound financial position. They accordingly filed a new scheme of arrangement applying this principle to the fixed charges. The scheme was filed on the 20th November, 1897. The necessary assents were much more quickly obtained than in 1889, and the scheme was enrolled on the 12th February, 1898.

As regards the 4 per cent. debenture stocks which in various issues formed the bulk of the borrowed capital the amount of capital was not reduced by the new scheme, but a new stock, called "Consolidated Debenture Stock," was created to take its place, bearing interest at 3 per cent. To compensate for the loss of interest, each holder received 27 per cent. of 4 per cent. preference stock, so that the new income on each £100 of old debenture stock was £4 1s. 7½d. as against £4. The two earliest sets of mortgages were to be paid off out of an issue of £750,000 3 per cent. prior line debenture stock at £110, and £112 stock for every £100 mortgage. The later mortgagees were given the option of

receiving £112 consolidated debenture stock for each £100 of mortgage. Failing the exercise of the option, they were to be paid off out of moneys raised by the issue of consolidated debenture stock. The holders of charges on specific properties provided for in the earlier scheme of arrangement had been disposed of meanwhile. The deferred debenture stock holders were given £108 per cent. in the 4 per cent. preference stock in exchange for their holdings. The power to fund interest was continued, but it was made unnecessary to fund the whole of the half year's interest if  $\frac{1}{2}$  or 1 per cent. could be paid.

The secured interest reserve fund was kept alive as the "Interest Reserve Fund." The whole of the proceeds of sales of land were to be added to this fund. When it exceeded £100,000 the balance was to be used in the purchase and extinction of the debenture stocks or preference stocks.

There was an object in creating the prior lien debenture stock beyond that of providing the means of raising money to pay off the earliest mortgages which only absorbed little more than half the total issue. Under the Working Union Act any capital required for the improvement of the docks could be advanced jointly and the Joint Committee had to pay 4 per cent. interest on capital so advanced. The India Company had not been in a position to raise new capital, so that all the profits of the transaction which was possible at the low rates of interest then prevalent had gone to the London Company who were able to raise capital without difficulty. The India directors took the opportunity of the better credit for their securities obtained by means of the scheme to secure the right of advances to the Joint Committee, and when the scheme was confirmed, duly exercised the right.

The passing of this scheme proved of great benefit to the company. No further draft was made upon the reserve fund for interest, and as from that time the income of the Joint Committee was improved the company were able to maintain the regular payment of interest on the preference stock until the amalgamation in 1901.

We turn back to the régime of the Joint Committee, which commenced on the 1st January, 1889, and ended on the 31st December, 1900. In that time the chairman of the London Company was inevitably the chairman of the



Joint Committee. The position was successively filled by Mr. Norwood, Mr. Hubbard, and Mr. Cater Scott. The Act required that if the chairman was a London Company's representative the deputy chairman was to be an India Company's representative. The deputy chairmen were successively: Mr. Hankey, Mr. Tod, Sir Henry D. Le Marchant, and the Hon. Sydney Holland. Mr. H. W. Williams, the assistant general manager of the London Company, and Mr. E. H. Baily, the assistant secretary of the India Company, were appointed joint managers. Mr. Williams, shortly after the Working Union, became sole manager. Mr. Henry J. Morgan, the secretary of the London Company became secretary to the Joint Committee, and filled that office during the whole of the committee's existence.

It would have been far more satisfactory if the fusion could have been a complete one, but the confused condition of the India Company's finances and the uncertain issue of the heavy litigation hanging over that company precluded this possibility. The success of the Working Union was handicapped from the first by the fact that the Joint Committee itself was directly responsible to no one. Any of its acts which did not meet the approval of the India Company could not be successfully challenged by the India Company's proprietors, however inimical those acts might be to their interests, if they were acts relating to management of the dock business. The London Company had the majority, and naturally considered matters from a London point of view. Though the old staff of the India Company felt that preference for the higher positions in the service was given to men who had served the majority of the board in the past, there is no reason to suppose that any such preference was prejudiced by any other consideration than that the capacity of the London officers was better known to the ruling majority. As time revealed the superior ability and training of India officers they had nothing to complain of in this respect.

The real handicap arose from the relative difference of their capital stocks and the increased benefits to the India Company when the earnings exceeded £475,000. It will be seen from the above figures of the two companies' capital accounts that the capital stock of the London Company

was £5,750,000, whilst that of the India Company was £2,385,000. Out of the total capital stock of the two companies, 71 per cent. belonged to the London Company and 29 per cent. to the India Company. This proportion roughly approximated to the division of profits up to £475,000, viz., 69 and 31 per cent. Shortly after that figure of profits was reached the India proprietors began to receive a dividend and they were entitled to 50 per cent. out of the profits beyond the £475,000. Their smaller percentage of only 29 per cent. of the total capital stock came to their aid by giving them a much better rate of dividend for every additional pound earned. For every 1 per cent. added to the India dividend the London Company only earned 8s. per cent. This fact influenced the India proprietors to favour an enterprising—even a risky—policy, because as the income for some years remained at about the £475,000 limit which gave them no dividend, they had very little to lose by any unsuccessful venture and very much to gain if it were a success. On the other hand, for any unfortunate project, the London Company would share 69 per cent. of the loss, whilst they only had 50 per cent. to gain for distribution over a much larger capital. The London Company were therefore inclined to a conservative policy and, being in the majority, had their way. For many years they were timid in initiating any stroke for obtaining new business or even in fighting for the maintenance of old connexions if the effort threatened even a temporary shrinkage of profits. This policy provoked discontent amongst the India Company's proprietors, and was continually challenged by individual members of the India Board from the early days of the Joint Committee's régime, but without any tangible result for many years. On one occasion the India Company's shareholders, who had also had some interest in the London Company, attended the meeting of the London Company and attacked the management for caring only for the predominant partner. Suspicions were engendered that the object of the majority was to keep the profits down until the India Company would be glad to accept a complete amalgamation on almost nominal terms. But, with every opportunity of knowing what was possible to be known of other men's motives, the writer does not believe that any such design



existed. The more probable explanation is that the London directors, having had painful experience of reduced dividends on their capital stock, did not care to disturb a condition of things which permitted the prospect of maintaining a 2 per cent. distribution. For a considerable time the India Board were not quite unanimous themselves in questioning the wisdom of being content with a quiet development of business, and this delayed any strong action on the part of the India Board. The discontented elements, however, were voiced and had effect on the conduct of business, and some of the old personal feeling between the two Boards began to revive. The pressure of the India proprietors became augmented until in 1898 the India Board was united in demanding a management which gave their proprietors some profit on their capital. Trade, unfortunately, was not good in these years. They were the lean years before the agitation which Mr. Joseph Chamberlain led for the revision of tariffs. There appeared to be no prospect of increase of income to be derived from better business, but the London Company at length agreed to certain action in connexion with the arrangements with shipowners and wharfingers which will be described later. The efforts were, however, faint-hearted, for they were forced on the majority against their will, and only undertaken with a view to temporizing with the opposition. They occupied much time, but proved futile for their purpose. At length the India Board, wearied by the lack of success, seriously considered whether they should apply to Parliament for a dissolution of a Union which had brought them so little benefit. This plan had to be rejected as impracticable. There remained one weapon only, and that was obstruction, and this was applied by the refusal to agree to capital expenditure of any kind until they were satisfied that the future management of the joint undertaking secured more for the India Company than it had performed since the beginning of the Working Union, the refusal being applied even to enterprises which might have yielded additional income. The ultimate object aimed at was to secure an amalgamation on reasonable terms and to bring the whole system under the management of one Board responsible to one body of proprietors. This object was eventually achieved, and Parliament sanctioned the

Amalgamation Act which legalized the formation of the London and India Docks Company. The new company came into control of the docks as from the 1st January, 1901. Its career will be dealt with in the following chapter.

We will now proceed to detail some of the more important matters dealt with in the career of the Joint Committee.

At the outset the labour question became an acute one and threatened to nullify the advantages gained by the cessation of competition. The strike of 1889 is dealt with in some detail in the chapter on "Labour in the Port." Its connexion with this chapter is limited to the effect which the strike had upon the business of the Port. It stopped business altogether for three weeks. Whilst it was proceeding shipping was diverted to Southampton and other ports, British and foreign. Some of the business never came back again, and though the gloomy statement that this strike drove the greater part of our entrepôt trade away to the Continent need not be accepted, there can be no doubt that it gave an impetus to the movement (an impetus made the most of by the German shipowner) for direct shipments to Germany at the expense of London. This movement was bound in the nature of things to take place sooner or later. It was not, however, the actual strike which did the harm as the demoralization of labour which followed upon it. For at least twelve months afterwards dock labour was unmanageable. Its success in the struggle had turned the heads of the leaders, and new demands were made and acceded to. Can't they do the Port more injury than the extra 1d. per hour, or the 25 per cent. addition to the dock rates and charges which it necessitated.

The strike had a further unfortunate effect. The Joint Committee did not come out of the struggle with any honour. They gave way too soon or too late. Their case, such as it was, was never presented to the public in an understandable way. The inconvenience of the strike was realized by every one, and all that the public knew of the case was from the labour side. The most was made of the objections to the casual system of taking on labour. Ship-owners added to the difficulties by demanding the control of the labour discharging their ships. The public like some one to kick when disputes of this kind take place, and







A VIEW OF THE CUSTOM HOUSE FROM THE RIVER, 1753

From an engraving by J. BOWLES after MAURER



every one joined in kicking a body which was new to its work and not particularly brave. Something must be put down to the condition of Mr. Norwood's health. It was failing then, and a few months afterwards he died. But the Joint Committee had made a bad start, and its reputation was for many years marred by the recollections of this strike.

The most troublesome section of dock labour was that engaged in the discharge of ships, and as there seemed no prospect of an improvement, Mr. Norwood brought forward a proposition that this work should be handed over to the shipowners so far as it was practicable to do so. Though the practice in regard to discharging ships had not always been the same in the different docks, it had become the practice for many years before 1890 for this work to be performed by the dock companies at tariff rates, the only exception being that crews of vessels were permitted to undertake the work, a permission seldom exercised. The dock companies claimed the exclusive right of discharging ships—a right often disputed by shipowners, but never tested in the Courts of Law. Probably shipowners realized that even if they were successful in establishing the right, it would be an academic victory unless they could also establish the right of appropriating the quay berths, sheds, and cranes at the docks—a proposition which was obviously impossible to reconcile with the continued management of the docks by a dock company or any other responsible body. The liner steamship owners had always, however, been agitating for the right of discharging which they enjoyed at Liverpool, and the opportunity afforded by the conditions brought about by the strike was taken to press for the alteration in practice. It meant a revolution in the management of dock work. The handling of goods not only by the ship, but on the quay where they were landed, would be in the hands of the shipowners, while the import quay sheds would have to be occupied by the shipowners and the cranes let on hire to them. In the Royal Albert and Victoria Docks it meant having twenty masters instead of one. Two attractions of the change appealed to Mr. Norwood besides that of getting rid of labour difficulties. One was that the complaints and claims of shipowners on account of delays in discharging ships would disappear, and the other

was that the agreements which the London Company had made with their shipowners had not protected the latter against the contingency of their having to pay higher charges if discharging were given up.

It must in fairness to the officials of the Joint Committee be said that with the exception of the manager and secretary every one of them was against the change. Their objections were chiefly based on the ground that a large portion of warehousing business came to the Committee through the discharging being in their hands and that portions of the establishment were unsuitable for letting berths to shipowners. Their objections were also based on the difficulties inherent to having the staffs of shipowners and dock officials in control alongside each other at the docks. Liverpool was no precedent for London as the warehousing business was not 10 per cent. of that done at the London Docks, and it was urged by the officials, that, though rents might be secured for the hire of sheds on the Liverpool scale, the return to the Joint Committee would be inadequate and that the only person to profit by the alteration would be the new class of master stevedores who would be created to carry out the work in place of the Committee's superintendents. It was also held that to allow the necessary margin of accommodation required for a number of shipowners having their own berths would involve an uneconomical use of the docks.

In spite of these objections, Mr. Norwood persisted in his scheme, and it was carried at the Joint Committee with considerable misgivings on the part of the India Company's representatives. One of them, Mr. Alexander Lawrie, the deputy chairman of the Company, so strongly objected to the decision that he resigned his seat on the board. The formal decision was made on the 25th November, 1890, to abandon the right of discharge at the Victoria and Albert and Tilbury Docks, and the new arrangements were duly carried out. The Joint Committee, realizing that the quays and sheds of the upper docks as then constructed were so closely connected with the warehousing systems that any joint occupation of the quays was practically impossible, declined to let sheds there, and with a few exceptions, including special berths let to coasting lines, vessels have at these docks continued to be



discharged by the dock authority. Panic policies seldom answer their purpose, and the views expressed by the dissentient dock officers have been completely justified by the results of the policy. But the worst result was not so completely foreseen by anyone, namely, the effect on labour. What it has meant in this respect has been a continuance of the system of casual labour so far as shipowners' import work is concerned. The reorganization of their labour system, made by the Joint Committee after the strike, is dealt with elsewhere, and was one of the greatest reforms in dock history, and redeemed many of the mistakes of their half-hearted policy in other respects. It would, however, have been much more effective if it could have included the whole of the labour in the docks, because the labour to be pooled would have been of greater volume and the number of men to be offered permanent employment would have more than correspondingly increased. By allowing each shipowner to be a law to himself as regards the conditions and terms of employment there was created a class of men receiving higher wages than the Joint Committee offered, but working irregularly, with heavy overtime pay one week and idleness the next, in busy times competed for by shipowners with surreptitious bonuses, and in slack times left to fend for themselves. There will be no final solution of the dock labour problem until the Port of London Authority reverses the decision of the Joint Committee and again undertakes all operations in the docks, including the stevedoring work of loading ships as well as discharging ships.

Though the shipowners had clamoured for the right to discharge their own ships, they had not bargained that the new arrangements would be taken advantage of to extort higher charges from them. They were in future to pay for the towage of their vessels in dock, which so far had been included in the dock dues. This had, of course, no connexion with the new discharging arrangements. For the latter purpose fixed quay berths and sheds were assigned to them, and they were asked to pay for the accommodation the same rent as was charged at Liverpool, viz., 2s. 6d. per square yard for the area of quay and shed which they occupied, as well as the dock dues, which were then 1s. per ton.

To carry into effect the new arrangement the Joint Committee issued a series of so-called "regulations" to which shipowners wishing to hire berths were asked to subscribe. The P. and O. Company and other shipowners using the Albert and Victoria Docks resented the tone of these regulations, and declared them to be *ultra vires*. They claimed the right to choose their own berths and sought in the High Court for a declaration to the effect that the new code was invalid. It was never quite clear what was the real aim of these shipowners in this action, but it was suspected that though they had come to a settlement with the London Company in connexion with their agreements made during the competition, they felt that their rivals who had gone to Tilbury had done better still, and so they were determined to be disagreeable in the hope of obtaining further concessions. Another reason which may have influenced the action taken by the shipowners was that when the strike of 1889 took place they thought they could do better for themselves if, instead of there being one great employer of labour (the Joint Committee), there were a number of independent employers of labour, each employing men whom he knew to be best fitted to carry out his work, but that they had since found that the labour question was more difficult than they anticipated. They were in effect complaining of being compelled to adopt a system which had been introduced to meet the appeal made by Sir Thomas Sutherland that the dock authorities should give up the right of discharging and let the shipowners take it over. Another reason may have been that they had discovered that it was going to cost them more to do their own discharging. Whatever the motive may have been, there could be no real objection to the substance of the so-called "regulations," and the most the shipowners could have expected was a revision of their form. On this latter point Lord Justice Bowen, one of the judges who heard the case when it was taken to the Court of Appeal, remarked that, while an unwary shipowner, hailing from some primitive quarter of the commercial world where innocence of the powers of the London Dock companies prevailed, might be deceived by the tone of superior authority assumed in the regulations, the P. and O. Company had certainly not been the victims of any such innocent delusion. He laid



down the principle that nothing except agreement and convention could obtain for the P. and O. Company the privileges which they desired, and that such privileges the Joint Committee could not be compelled to grant except on their own terms. The answer to the P. and O. complaint was accordingly this, that so far as they were concerned, the book of regulations was not put forward as a book of judicial by-laws, but as the only conditions on which the company could obtain appropriated berths. They could take those appropriated berths or leave them as they pleased, but they could have them on the terms of submitting to the regulations. The P. and O. Company had no more right, under such circumstances, to relief from the Court than a gentleman who chose to complain that some lady of his acquaintance had declined to marry him except on conditions which were highly unreasonable. Judgment was unanimously given in favour of the Joint Committee.

Few dock improvements were made during the régime of the Joint Committee. The committee was supplied with more dock accommodation than was wanted when it was established, and the shipping trade advanced so slowly between 1889 and 1901 that there was never any excessive strain on the quay or warehouse accommodation, except for a few months in 1892, when abnormal imports of grain came to Europe from America to provide for the deficient harvests of that year in the Continent generally. Two new dock entrances form the chief contribution of the Joint Committee to the dock improvement programme of the Port. The first was the reconstruction of the Blackwall Entrance of the West India Dock, with two new cuttings from the basin into the Import and Export Docks respectively. The existing entrance and cuts so altered were the original ones of 1802, only 45 feet wide, and constructed to admit vessels which, in the trades then using the docks, were seldom more than 350 tons register. On a good tide it was possible to admit steamers up to about 1,500 tons gross register, but as most modern vessels were in 1892 far in excess of this tonnage, the dock had been practically idle except for warehousing business for several years. The new entrance and cuts were made 60 feet in width, with the lock 470 feet in length, and at spring tides vessels of about

8,000 tons gross register can be dealt with. At the same time pumping machinery was installed for the purpose of maintaining a spring tide level of water in the whole of the West India Dock system. The new entrance and other works were ready for use in 1894. The other dock entrance reconstructed was that of the South West India Dock at a cost of £45,000. It was not a complete reconstruction, only the rebuilding of one side of the lock with a widening of the lock from 45 to 55 feet. This work was at first opposed as a useless expenditure by the India Company's representatives, and only agreed to eventually as a part of a settlement made between the companies in connexion with their terms of the amalgamation. It was opened for business in 1902. The most notable developments made by the Joint Committee were in connexion with the frozen meat business, which during their administration began to make remarkable progress. The imports into London rose from 51,300 tons in 1889 to 171,100 tons in 1900. The whole of the meat came in colonial steamers discharging in the docks of the Joint Committee, and cold storage accommodation was provided for it as the business grew. At the Victoria Dock, where most of the cargoes were required to be stored, several additional warehouses were erected. They were built of timber because it was not then clear how far the experiment of importing frozen meat might prove to be a successful one; but, notwithstanding their light construction, they are in active use to-day, and owing to the cheap initial cost, have proved remunerative. The Joint Committee also adapted a West India Dock brick warehouse for the business, and built a cold store adjoining Smithfield Market. In the last months of 1900 they deposited a Bill in Parliament for the making of a new dock to the south of the Royal Albert Dock, but as this was determined upon after the terms of amalgamation of the companies had been settled, this Bill properly belongs to the history of the London and India Docks Company, and will be so dealt with.

In connexion with the management of the undertaking, the question which excited most internal controversy in the Joint Committee was that of the relation between the committee and the wharfingers. The competition with the wharfingers, though commencing at the time the privileges



lapsed after 1823, did not become very pronounced until about 1870. The dock companies were in possession of the trades; they had great prestige; the directors, who were numerous, were the most influential merchants in the City of London; and the staffs of the companies were experienced in the many operations connected with the marketing of produce. Though the lower rates of storage of the wharfingers were tempting, there was an offset in the better security of the dock warrant and the lower rates of insurance on merchandise prevailing at the docks. For a long period the wharfingers had to content themselves with such trades as the docks did not accommodate, or as were by trade requirements associated with the localities where particular wharves were situated. Great changes took place in the conduct of business, as stated in other pages of this book, following upon the opening of the Suez Canal in 1869 and the extension of the cable systems, favouring direct shipments to Marseilles, Hamburg and other Continental ports, whose prosperity dates from about this period. In the course of time the effect of the combined causes was seriously to affect London's position as an entrepôt port, and consequently to reduce not only the volume of goods requiring storage, but also the time such goods occupied warehousing space. The result in the Port of London was a general competition gradually developed between the docks and wharves for such business as was left to London. Tea rates were, for instance, reduced by 60 per cent. Grain rates came down to an utterly unremunerative figure. Some of the wharves fell into the hands of mortgagees, others into the hands of large merchants, and the low purchase prices at which the premises to be sold were obtained enabled the purchasers to enter into business equipped with the advantage of a small capital account. As has been shown, the dock companies were engaged in a competition of their own, and by the end of 1886, when the struggle had been intensified by the opening of the Tilbury Dock, there could have been few wharfingers in the Port who were receiving any reasonable return on the capital or reward for their service to the Port. The improvement in the relations between the two dock companies in 1888 at first affected the question of shipping rates only, and the only step then taken in regard to goods was to make an agreement with the tea

warehousekeepers under which level rates were to be charged by all concerned.

In connexion with the 1889 strike, the dock companies and the wharfingers had been brought into much personal contact. As events progressed, the point arose whether the understanding on labour questions which had brought the parties together could not be extended to rates and arrangements with merchants, and by the end of 1889 an agreement was made between the Joint Committee and the leading wharfingers housing foreign produce known as "The Dock and Wharf Produce Agreement." The Surrey Commercial and Millwall Dock Companies did not become parties to the agreement. The Surrey Company's interests were then confined to soft timber and grain. They had a monopoly of the former, and as regards grain the position taken up by the Millwall Company was so impossible that grain had to be excluded from any agreement. Briefly, this agreement provided for the wharfingers being allowed to quote  $12\frac{1}{2}$  per cent. discount on the rates to be agreed from time to time, and 10 per cent. discount on all other goods. To carry out the agreement there was a board appointed, consisting of eighteen persons, four representing the docks and fourteen representing the wharves. Penalties were provided for breaches of the agreement. The agreement was subject to six months' notice, and the right to give notice applied to any classes of goods if withdrawal was desired. The right of the wharfingers to quote the discounts was justified by the higher rates of insurance payable by merchants housing their goods at the wharves, and it was claimed by the wharfingers that the percentage of  $12\frac{1}{2}$  and 10 per cent. adjusted this difference. A separate agreement was made for wines and spirits.

At the time the agreement was made in 1889, a general advance of 25 per cent. was made in the rates on shipping and goods to compensate for the enhanced price of labour. This advance, coupled with the abolition of the special inducements and reductions offered in the time of the intense competition shared with the normal increase of trade in the Port, should have re-established the fortunes of the dock companies. But, as has been indicated, the progress of the Joint Committee's warehousing business and income was disappointing, and continued to be so. The



chief falling off was in the better classes of warehousing business, and though the general conditions of trade were blamed for the absence of success, it became evident that the lower rates in force at the wharves were drawing the customers of the docks away from their old allegiance and keeping away new customers. While it was admitted that some business had been lost, the majority of the Joint Committee held that it was better to sacrifice a part in order to retain the remainder, and in 1896 the chairman of the India Company's Board, Sir Henry Le Marchant, feeling strongly that such a policy would in the long run lead to the disappearance of the whole of such warehousing business as was worth retaining, endeavoured to persuade the Joint Committee to withdraw from the agreement and to insist upon level rates. But the London Company's majority were difficult to move, and Sir Henry had further difficulties with some of his own board. The only success he had was in getting level rates on sugar and obtaining a reduction of the discount on some of the principal articles to 5 per cent., but it took him three years to secure even these concessions.

The proprietors of the London Company were, however, by this time getting restive for higher dividends than 2 per cent., and the London directors, though unwilling to endanger the peace agreement with the wharfingers, wished to increase the joint income. An opportunity appeared to present itself in regard to use of their quays and sheds by goods landed by shipowners from their vessels for the purpose of being sorted before delivery to the consignee's craft. Legally such goods incurred the charges of the Joint Committee by the mere act of being landed from the vessel, but under the arrangements by which the berths were let to shipowners at a fixed rent, the charges were not levied against the consignee, but were considered as commuted by the shipowner by his payment of the fixed rent for the accommodation. It need hardly be explained that if the ordinary dock tariff had been applied for such goods the yield to the Joint Committee would have far surpassed the revenue from the fixed berths which in ordinary cases then amounted to from £600 to £700 a year per berth. In reviewing the question, the Joint Committee decided to give notice to the shipowners that in future they would

incur no rent for fixed berths and that the committee would be content with the revenue from a reduced wharfage rate on such goods not for warehousing with the committee as might be put on to the quays or sheds for the ship's convenience, and they added that if the shipowners preferred to revert to the system of the dock authority carrying out the discharge of ships they were prepared to undertake it again. The shipowners at once realized that the effect of the change in the method of charging would be largely to increase their payments as it would be impossible to pass the charges on to the consignees. The alternative was equally unacceptable because they appreciated having the discharging in their own hands and moreover had round them staffs of foremen and men who would be thrown out of employment if the work were relinquished. They must have perceived, too, that the alternative put forward was not a genuine one, as it would have been impossible for the committee to organize the necessary staff by the date given for carrying out the new discharging arrangements. The P. and O. Company met the proposals by ostentatiously buying a strip of frontage in St. Clement's Reach, threatening to start wharves of their own there. Other shipowners professed to have come to terms with the owners of the Dagenham site with a similar object in view. The action of the shipowners was as much bluff as the alternative of the Joint Committee had been, but it had the effect of delaying the carrying out of the committee's decision. Negotiations with the shipowners ensued, and in the end they agreed to a small increase in rent and some minor charges yielding an additional income of £15,000 a year. No alteration in the practice in regard to discharging took place, and the investment having proved very remunerative for its purpose, the P. and O. Company kept the land in hand for twenty years ready for any future emergency of the sort. The committee came out of the transaction with very little credit. If they had not intended to insist on a substantial increase of revenue they should not in any case have broached the question of making drastic alterations of practice. A firm determination to have more revenue by doubling the rents of sheds would have been successful and would never have raised the animosity excited by proposals which so intimately affected the new and powerful



stevedoring interests, brought into existence by the Joint Committee's unfortunate decision of 1891, to give up the discharge of ships.

The pressure of the proprietors not having been removed by the small results obtainable from the shipowners, the Joint Committee in 1899 turned to a source of income which they belived was properly, though not legally, open to them. Having failed to get charges from shipowners on overside goods landed on the quays, they tried to get them on barges and the goods conveyed by them. It will be remembered that all the Acts of Parliament for the construction of docks contained a section debarring the dock companies from levying charges on barges so long as they were engaged in delivering or receiving goods to and from vessels. In the first fifty years of dock history the privilege had not been inimical to the dock interest. When a vessel entered the docks the cargo was usually landed and warehoused there. In cases where the cargo was discharged over the side of the ship into a barge it was usually of a character which did not require warehousing or which the dock company did not care to warehouse. In the first instance, barges fetching away goods after being warehoused became nominally liable to charges by receiving goods from the quay, but the dock company, having already been paid charges for warehousing, did not want further to penalize their customers by levying imposts on their lighters more than on their carts which came into the docks for the same purpose. Instances of taking cargo away direct from board ship were not frequent or of great volume, and therefore the exemption clause had not been felt to be oppressive. By the year 1855 the goods taken overside in the docks on the north of the Thames had reached proportions which made the question a serious one, the more so as it was due to the rising competition of the wharfingers, whose barges were gaining free admission to the docks and taking away business which the directors regarded as their own preserve. The directors of the London and St. Katharine and India Companies for once joined forces and applied to Parliament and deposited a joint Bill in the session of 1855 for cancelling the exemption clause in favour of barges. They appear to have impressed Mr. Cardwell, then President of the Board of Trade, with the equity of their demands

and gained the promise of his support, but he deserted them at the last moment and the Bill was rejected by the House of Commons on second reading by an enormous majority. The chief reason that influenced the House was the fact that whatever the validity of the grievance the companies could not plead that they were then in an impecunious state.

During the next forty years, the conditions which favoured overside delivery continued to progress and in the year 1898 it was estimated that of the goods discharged in the docks of the Joint Committee, less than 20 per cent. paid charges to the committee. The remainder were taken away by craft, either to factories in London or to the river wharves for warehousing there. But as has just been explained, instead of being delivered from vessels direct to the craft, the greater part of these overside goods were landed on the quays for sorting, and incurred charges. It will be seen that not only such goods had lost their exemption but the lighters had lost it too, so that it appeared as if the general practice which had grown up in the course of the century had brought about the opportunity for the Joint Committee to obtain justice for themselves by exercising their legal rights to impose charges on the thousands of barges which conveyed goods to or from their quays. The chief objection to this course was that it did not treat all traders alike, and would particularly penalize those whose goods were imported into London in the liners. Nor was the recent experience of the Joint Committee, when they attempted to make the shipowners pay wharfage charges on goods landed, sufficiently encouraging to make them incur the odium of a measure which would be inequitable in its operations, and so manifestly against the spirit of the intention of Parliament, when it originally granted the exemption. It was the consideration of these circumstances that induced the Joint Committee to ask the sanction of Parliament to what was tantamount to a reversal of the policy adopted in 1799. It was felt that the reasons given for declining to reconsider the question in 1855 could not be urged in 1899, inasmuch as the financial position with one company paying only  $2\frac{1}{2}$  per cent. dividend and the other only  $\frac{1}{2}$  per cent. was a miserable one, and utterly inadequate for a purpose then being considered by the







LONDON BRIDGE

*Drawn, engraved and published by William Daniell, 1804*



committee, namely, the raising of money for the extension of the Royal Albert Dock. Accordingly a Bill was deposited in Parliament providing that craft entering the London and India Docks for the purpose of discharging or receiving goods to or from on board of any vessel should in future be subject to a charge of 4d. per ton register, and further that goods in such barges should be subjected to charges not exceeding 1s. 6d. per ton. Transhipment goods were to be exempted from the proposed charges.

The Bill was a very short one, but it aroused opposition in every quarter. Shipowners and traders combined with the City and the County Council to resist it. The majority of the County Council, then in the hands of the Progressive Party, had since their establishment evinced their desire to add the Port to their jurisdiction, and were perhaps the most violent antagonists of the measure. The Bill came up for second reading on the 16th May, 1900. Mr. Cripps was in charge of it for the Joint Committee. Its rejection was moved by the present Lord St. Albans, one of the members for the City. Sir Albert Rollit, representing the Chamber of Commerce, seconded the motion for rejection, which was supported by County Council spokesmen. Only one solitary supporter was found for giving the Bill a second reading, and then only on the plea that it provided the opportunity for an inquiry into the whole question. The fortunes of the Bill depended upon the attitude of the Government. The Board of Trade was obviously the Department concerned with the Bill. Mr. C. T. Ritchie (afterwards Lord Ritchie of Dundee) was then President of the Board of Trade. He accordingly enunciated the Government view. This was that they regarded the question as not a local one but a national one, as to whether the Port of London was to maintain the position which it occupied, as well as to be able to enter into effective competition with the outports and foreign ports. He added that there was so much agreement in the House as to the necessity of some inquiry as to how matters could be improved that the only question for decision was whether the inquiry should be made by a Committee of the House on the Bill, or by a Royal Commission directed to inquire into the question touching the whole merit and conduct of the docks, the sources of revenue for dock improvements, and the

improvements of the waterway. The decision of the Government was to appoint a Royal Commission and Mr. Ritchie laid emphasis on the intention of the Government that the Commission should not be a partizan body, but should consist of men who were calculated to be impartial judges in the case to be submitted to them. Mr. Bryce, as representing the official opposition, supported the Government proposal, and the motion for the second reading was negatived without a division.

The line taken by the Government had been previously communicated to the dock directors, and was in fact in accordance with their anticipations. They had felt that it was unlikely that any such power would be given to them without a searching Parliamentary inquiry, and they welcomed the opportunity, not only of having the whole question of the Port of London comprehensively considered, but also of meeting the criticism on the general management of the docks which for some time had been publicly made by the County Council and traders who were eager to obtain the control of the dock systems.

The proceedings of the Royal Commission and their report will form the subject of a separate chapter.

The Bill for the amalgamation of the London and India Companies was sanctioned by Parliament on the 30th July, 1900, so that the connexion of the Joint Committee (which expired at the end of the year) with the Commission's labours only lasted for a short time and was then only a nominal one. In considering the twelve years' work of the Joint Committee it must be recorded to their credit that if the opening of the Tilbury Dock was the first occasion upon which the necessity for Port reforms was enunciated, it was the initiation by the London and India Docks Joint Committee of the controversial measure for levying dues on barges that proved to be the first of the series of practical steps which led to the long outstanding Port of London question being finally disposed of by a measure which has proved to be a satisfactory settlement for all the immense interests involved.

*End of Volume I.*



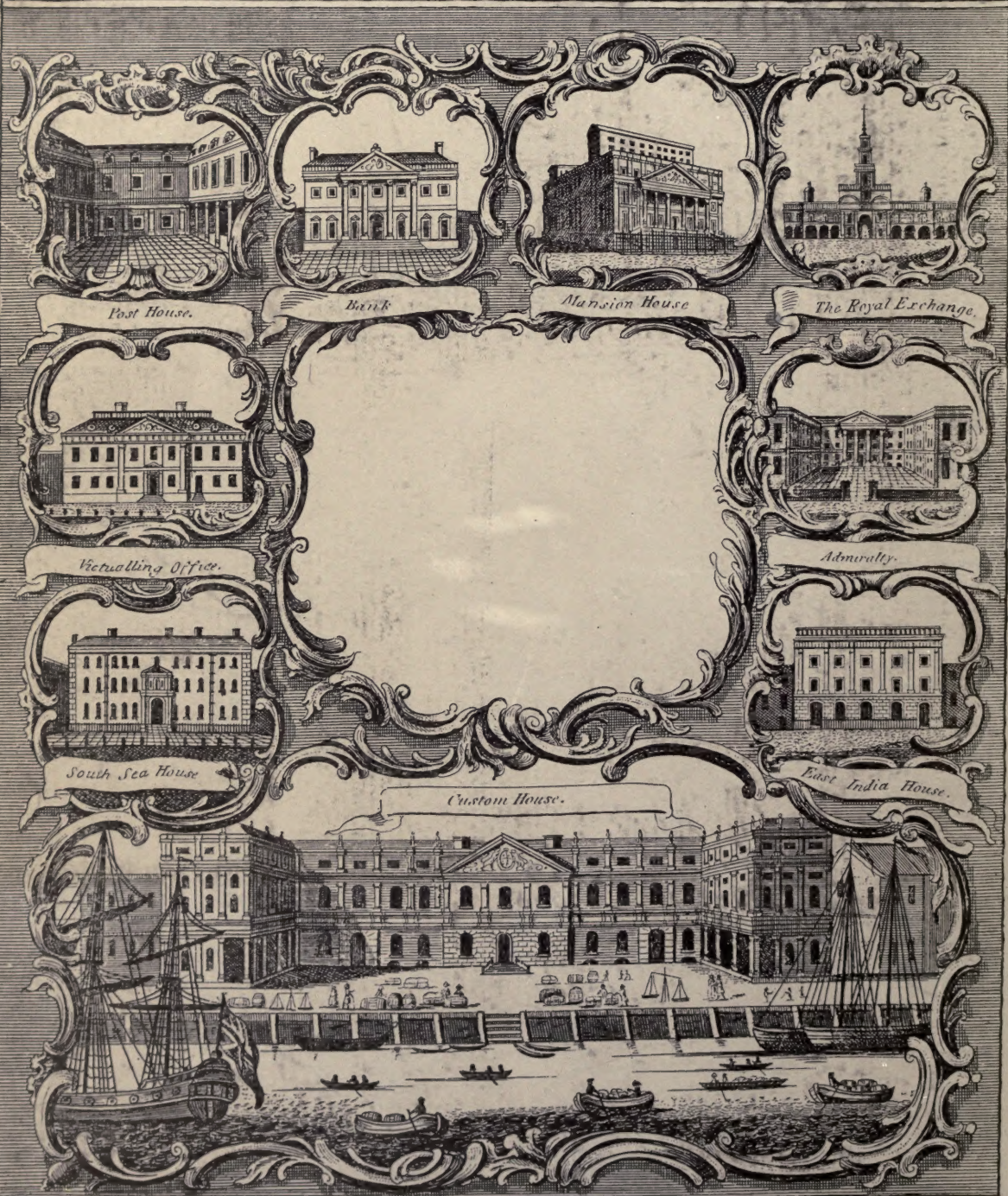


THE WESTMINSTER PRESS  
HARROW ROAD  
LONDON

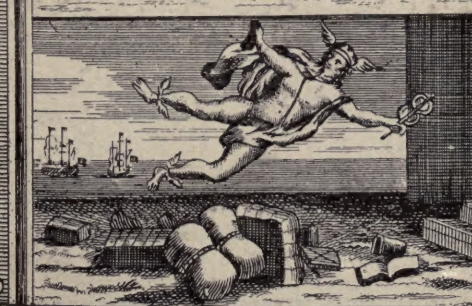
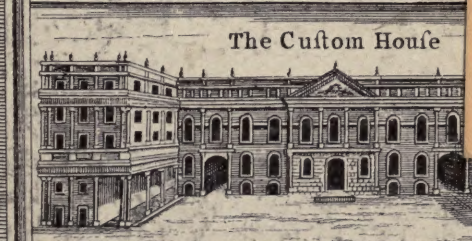












169693  
Broodbank, (Sir) Joseph Guinness  
History of the Port of London.  
v.l.  
EcT B8715h

University of Toronto  
Library  
DO NOT  
REMOVE  
THE  
CARD  
FROM  
THIS  
POCKET  
Acme Library Card Pocket  
Under Pat. "Ref. Index File"  
Made by LIBRARY BUREAU





